NEW (?) THEOLOGY

BASIL WILBERFORCE, D.D.

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THOUGHTS ON THE UNIVERSALITY AND CONTINUITY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

BY THE

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PREFACE

THE sermons in the present volume profess to be nothing more than answers, delivered in the ordinary course of parochial ministry, to questions put from time to time to the preacher by members of his congregation desirous for information as to the so-called "New Theology," and at whose request these answers are here reproduced in more permanent form. Certain propositions will be found to be frequently reiterated, on the principle of Sydney Smith's saying: "He is not the discoverer who once utters a truth, but he who repeats it again and again until he compels men to hear."

What is "New Theology"? There is a suggestive saying in Eccles. i. 10, R.V., which seems to me to supply the answer: "Is there a thing whereof men say this is new? It hath been in the ages that were before us." This utterance of the great pessimist assuredly includes that aggregate of conceptions of the Divine nature, and

operation, and relation to humanity, which finds historical expression under the name of Theology.

Speaking accurately, there is no Theology of which men can say: "See, this is new." There are revivals of obsolete conceptions, fresh illuminations of ancient truths "which have been in the ages which were before us," but there is no "New Theology."

The Gospel itself is not New Theology, but the interpretation, the fulfilment of all Theology since the world was. St. Paul virtually acknowledges this when, in his Epistle to the Colossians, he wrote: "The Gospel which ye have heard was preached to every creature under heaven"; and when, on Mars' Hill, St. Paul quoted Aratus, and proclaimed the Immanence of God, in the words "In Him we live and move and have our being," he was not, as the Athenians said, "the setter forth of strange gods," or the author of a "New Theology," but the exponent of a truth as old as the world.

This was clearly in the mind of Augustine when he wrote ("Opera," vol. i., p. 12): "The thing itself which is now called the Christian religion was really known to the ancients, nor was wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race until the time that Christ came in the flesh, from whence the true religion, which had previously existed, began to be called Christian; and this,

in our day, is the Christian religion, not as having been wanting in former times, but as having in later times received this name."

This, too, was the conviction of Justin Martyr, who, in his first Apology (chaps. xxii. and xlvi.), writes: "Those who lived according to the Logos" —that is, who obeyed their highest intuitions— "were really Christians, though they have been thought to be Atheists, as were Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks, and such as resembled them."

It was the mission of the Christ to restore, to illuminate, and to manifest in His own Person, the ancient Theology of the Immanence of God; to convince man that humanity is an expression of the Universal Father-Soul; to appeal to man "above himself to lift himself" because he belongs to God; to assure man that he is immortal because God is immortal, and that he has within him a life which is Divine; that of that Divine life, which is the attribute of humanity as a whole, He, the Lord Jesus, was the absolutely perfect embodiment for purposes of observation; that as this Immanence of God in man is recognized, acknowledged, obeyed, it will regenerate man's nature, control his lower conditions, emancipate him from the tyranny of the senses, and finally conform him to the image of the Perfect Son. Thus did the Christ amplify, interpret, illuminate,

and restore to its right place in the thoughts of men the Theology discoverable in the ancient Eastern writings 2,000 years before the Incarnation, namely, the illimitable Fatherhood of the Infinite Originator, the Immanence of the Divine in man, and consequently the essential solidarity of humanity, truths which, when emphasized in the present day, are designated, sometimes seriously, sometimes contemptuously,

New Theology.

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NEW (?) THEOLOGY

"The servants which drew the water knew."
JOHN ii. 9.

I AM convinced that it is the purpose of the whole of the Epiphany teaching to provide for us strong consolation, to lead us into the depths of the Fatherly love of God, and this is done, not by direct declarations, but by stimulating the thought-capacity, by awakening the hereditary hunger for knowledge of God, by suggesting the nearness of the Spirit of God, by leading us to realize that the universe glows with His diffused life, and therefore that all things, however puzzling and cross-working they appear, are and must be under the Divine over-rule of a responsible Creative Spirit of limitless resources, adequate to every possible emergency.

The Gospels for the Epiphany season are apparently selected with this object in view, and they all seem to me to radiate from that transcendent sign recorded in the Gospel for to-day—the miracle at Cana in Galilee.

The miracle is inexhaustible in its teaching,

but I will confine myself to three considerations :

1. It encourages a tranquil rest in the omnipotence of the Infinite Parent Spirit by intimating His universal Immanence.

2. It suggests the reward of humble obedience to the promptings and guidance of the inner voice of this Immanent Spirit.

3. It implies the responsibility attaching to the recognition of the inseverability of the human and the Divine.

First, it encourages tranquil rest. It seems to say, " Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul ? Put thy trust in God." And this it does by intimating to us, with infinite delicacy, by hint rather than by demonstration, after the manner of all God's self-revelations, that the Creator of the Universe is the Spirit of Evolution, that the ceaselessly reproducing power in Nature is a manifestation of His Immanence and active life ; it teaches us to—

> " See, in part,
> That all, as in some piece of art,
> Is toil co-operant to an end."

It teaches us to believe that all that IS is God's thought in process of transmutation into matter, and therefore that what we call moral evil is (in this life's education) a necessary condition of moral growth ; that goodness is the fruit of energetic struggle against that which contradicts

it ; that the true life of the human soul emerges from the deepest contrasts, and that, therefore, when the life has emerged for the individual, the community, the race, the contrast will be taken away, and the phenomenon called evil will be destroyed.

For, first, the miracle of Cana exhibits God in His true position in the material world, and adds a dignity to the most familiar processes of Nature, by disclosing the " Word of the Father " as the evolving life of all things. Thus, it corrects partial, inadequate, and false views of God. For example, it corrects Pantheism, the most fascinating of all the half-truths, which identifies the universe with God, and it corrects it by showing Him as a Person manipulating Nature from outside while embodied in a part of the very Nature He was manipulating. Again, it corrects Deism, the coldest of all religions, which practically banishes God from all free, personal action in the world that He has made, and it corrects it by showing Him Incarnate in the Lord Jesus actually at work upon the laws of its growth. It establishes the Christian conception of God as the great comprehensive solution of all the difficulties of all religions, by showing us the Man Christ Jesus as the Incarnation, or human enclosure, of the Logos, or logic, or Eternal Reason, of the all-filling God, manifesting His glory.

The word rendered " glory " is the untranslatable Greek word *doxa*, which here signifies,

amongst other things, His oneness with the infinite life immanent in Nature ; and this oneness, or glory, Christ, the Logos, manifests by condensing into a moment of time months of natural growth and progress, during which moisture is absorbed into the vine-plant, into the blossom, into the grape, and whereby the grape swells and ripens and becomes wine. See then how, in the miracle of Cana, Godward thought is stimulated. We are shown that behind the life in the vine there is a greater life, and behind that an infinite life, a universal Parent life, and that this Parent life is God, and that God is conditioned in flesh in Jesus, and that the name of the universal responsible Parent life (as far as we are concerned) is "Jesus," the faultless, the self-sacrificing, the tender, the true. And if God be such an one as Jesus, we have no excuse for pessimism ; we need not shrink from trusting Him with the unsolved problems of Nature—the earthquake, the tiger's claw, the serpent's poison, and the ceaseless tragedy of blood and pain, for He is the omnipotent centre of things created, and He is not only responsible for our being, but loves us with an everlasting love, and doeth all things well.

This is the faith of the Christian ; this is the tranquil trust in the Love of the Over-Soul, which some speak of as a New Theology ; this will shine on when all words that profess to describe it are antiquated curiosities, and all theologies that have formulated its propositions have

been buried in oblivion. It must prevail, absorbing into itself all other religions, until here or hereafter it has slaked the thirst of the ages, and the darkest, lowest life shall know that the Father loves the world, and that the true life of every man is God within him.

Secondly, I think an incident in the history of the miracle indicates the reward of humbly and readily obeying the softest whisper, the gentlest impulse of that indwelling life of God which is the interior, eternal Kingdom of Heaven, and that reward is knowledge, assurance, the life and light of God becoming more and more a fact of personal experience.

"The servants which drew the water knew." This apparently unimportant parenthesis has, first, a doctrinal, and, secondly, a practical application; and first, doctrinal: the master of the ceremonies, occupied with the importance of his position, "knew not whence the water which was made wine was"; it startled him, annoyed him; he was accustomed to certain social conventionalities and a regular order of procedure, and the benumbing influence of established usage prevented him from recognizing that the inmost creative element of the universe was being unfolded from within the majestic Person of one of the guests. He didn't know.

One can almost picture his impatience with the bridegroom and the servants: "Where did you get this? This is something new that you are

springing upon us. This is off the lines of custom. I don't know where you got it." But "the servants which drew the water knew."

Now, I ask, is this glorious, stimulating truth of the inseverability of God and man, the immanence of God in man, the impregnable foundation of universal restitution — this certainty of an irresistible agency advancing mankind to a condition of perfection purposed before the world was, which many of us have been proclaiming for twenty years—is this a new theology ?

Some conventional, unillumined critic, some master of denominational ceremonies, stiffened in the conventional, asks : Whence comes this new teaching—these perilous, half-fermented ineptitudes of unorthodox minds, impatient with the traditional conceptions of the Churches ? It is new, it is off the lines of custom, it is dangerous ! In a sense, it is new. I suppose there is a sense in which rediscovery makes old things new. I suppose reversion to primitive type would seem new to minds of a particular cast. This idea of a new theology was suggested first by the Rev. T. T. Lynch, an able Congregationalist minister of fifty years ago, in a poem which I have often quoted :

> "There is a new commandment which
> New hearts alone can keep ;
> Its fruits, a new earth and new heaven
> Will with a new song reap.

And when this new command is kept,
With new eyes shall we see
New things of every kind except
A new theology ?

"Ecclesiastics, spider-like,
On Jesus Christ the door
Have spun their cobwebs fine until
They've darkly closed Him o'er.
They catch the souls that come to Him,
They seize them for a prey.
O blessed hour ! O happy man
That sweeps their webs away !

"And webs that any man may break
May many men repel,
And why should Heaven's door look as dark
As if it led to hell ?
Perhaps this new theology
Has come to do no more
Than sweep the cobwebs all away
From Jesus Christ the door."

The masters of ceremonies know not whence it is. They are unaware of that clear stream which has flowed down the ages through the Upanishads, and Plato, and Philo, and St. John, and Clement of Alexandria. "The servants which draw the water know." The sensitives, the idealists, the seers, the mystics, they who watch the growing light of God's glorious dawn, who patiently follow the gleam, who listen for the inner voice, they know whence this God-made wine of truth has come ; they know it is no new concoction put into the old wine-skins ; they know that it is the old wine of God's self-revelation

being rediscovered ; that God does not need to be found and appeased ; that the supreme struggle of man should be, not to pacify an omnipotent despot, but to become conscious of a loving, responsible Father's operation within him ; they know that the power of the old illusions is passing away. It is utterly untrue to say that there is a decadence of religion in the present day ; there may be, there is, a decadence in the practice of certain external observances, but there has never been a period in human history when there has been a keener hunger for God. Superstitions are decadent, I allow ; limitations are losing their hold ; but the evolution of the Christ in humanity was never more marked. Moral, social, humane characteristics are more prominent to-day than they ever were before, and many silent, thinking men, who are not churchgoers, are more really religious in the deep and esoteric sense than—well, what shall we say ?—than Torquemada and his *auto-da-fé*, or than Calvin who burnt Servetus ? No, let the masters of the ceremonies, whether mitred abbots, or episcopal legislators, or governing bodies of trust chapels, be patient with the seers, the servants who draw the water, for they know. They have silently, secretly, patiently obeyed the command, " Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it " ; and He, the indwelling Christ, that measure of God's life, which is the glory and attribute of humanity as a whole, has whispered to them where and how the good wine of truth is to be found.

There is a practical application of this thought which I need hardly emphasize—" the servants which drew the water knew " : the obedient, simple-minded ministers to the needs of others. The line of service is the line of knowledge ; they who " do the will know of the doctrine." A life of selfish vanity, a life of idle indulgence, a life of mean self-concentration may have much religion in it, but it will not know the inwardness of this truth.

The miracle of Cana is the picture of the ceaseless activity of God transfiguring the human plant as there He did the vine-plant. The immanent power of God is effecting, slowly but surely, the moral restoration of mankind, and this work He is doing through the servants who draw the water, the loving hearts who rally round the weak, the tempted, the erring, the fallen. God bless the " servants who draw the water !" Never be discouraged ; remember it is not the servants who turn the water into wine. It is the Wonder-worker of Cana, who, dwelling in you, works the miracle through your hands. Every worker for the good of the brethren, however simple may be the work undertaken, is a servant drawing the water in our Father's unceasing, progressive miracle of changing discord into harmony, lower into higher, water into wine.

One final thought. A great responsibility attaches to the knowledge of this old theology

that some call new. Some of the "masters of the ceremonies" who "know not whence the water that was turned into wine was" are distressed at the prominence given to the divinity of humanity. Well, there is God's word for it—"Let us make man," or, rather, according to the correct translation of the Hebrew word, "let us generate man, in our image." Ah, they say, you have here forgotten the Fall. Now, whatever may be the full ethical bearing of the allegorical epitome of origins, in the account of what is called the Fall, it is clear that whatever that image of God was it was not destroyed by the Fall, for it was after the Fall that God appended the penalty of death to murder, because murder was an affront to the image of God in man. The likeness of man to God is the awful fact, while it is the central fact of human history. Man, as we see him, is an eternal thought of God. Translate literally Ps. viii. 4: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? Thou hast made him for a little while lower than Divine, that thou mayest crown him with glory and honour." This, you say, refers to the inner, invisible part of man, for his outward part is formed from the dust of the earth. Yes, this is true; the chemical elements which exist in the human body—oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, sulphur, phosphorus, lime, potash, sodium—are all found in the dust of the earth, and these are the sole constituents of the human body.

But then, God is the soul of the universe too! No, you cannot say where, in what part, the image of God is. Jesus was "the express image of God's person," and there would have been little difference in His appearance from that of others.

But Christ appeals to this divinity in man that He may lift our lives. I don't suppose we ever were nothing and nowhere, but now, as His sons and daughters, we are here. "God is Spirit," and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. But Spirit only can worship Spirit. So man is Spirit, and however we may have blurred, overlaid, disfigured the image of God, if the Christ lays His hand on any one of us this day, and asks whose we are, there can be but one answer:

> "I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice,
> And it told Thy love to me;
> But I long to rise on the wings of faith,
> And be closer drawn to Thee."

The conclusion is obvious. Know it, believe it, trust it, act upon it, live it. All lesser conditions vanish in the sight of this tremendous reality. Of course we often forget it. The constant demands and almost insolent usurpations of our lower nature often hide it from us; but to live consciously in the recollection of it, if it be but for an hour, stimulates life, strengthens character, refreshes vitality. How powerful a motive it affords for the struggle against sensual

appetite, anger, despondency, and the rest of the darker conditions of our flesh education. How it scatters the paltry worries that vex and harass. While the mind is fixed on it, how horrible does it make impurity, selfishness, rebellion. What it demands is the habit of self-surrender to the Divine overrule of the indwelling Christ Spirit, exposure of the inner being to the sunshine of the all-pervading, all-surrounding Divine Presence ; the rallying cry in despondency, " I am the Lord's," " Christ is in me the hope of glory," " Able to keep me from falling, by the power that worketh in me." To say " I can't," to accept and leave yourself as you find yourself, is the deepest denial of God. Carlyle was right when he said, " Nonsense, the impediment is in thyself ; here or nowhere is thy kingdom." To accept and leave the world as you find it is a similar denial of God. Vital, practical, remedial, world-salting Christianity is the direct, automatic fruit of the knowledge that you are a Christopher, a Christ-bearer, that the image and likeness indelibly branded into your inmost self is that of God. Help the Christ to win the world ; help to fulfil the transcendent utterance of the Christ in John xvii. : " The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them . . . that they may be one even as we are one. . . . I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."

SOUL-HUNGER

"Blessed are they that hunger."—MATT. v. 6.

I HAVE severed this Beatitude in twain because I desire to take it out of the particular into the universal, and because the sign recorded in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew of the miraculous feeding of four thousand hungry pilgrims in the prairie beyond the Sea of Galilee affords an acted drama of the esoteric meaning of the Beatitude.

I do not propose to elaborate the actual narrative of this miraculous feeding, as I wish to use it only as an analogy of a spiritual truth. It is the record of a miracle. What is a miracle? They who know that one life is immanent in the universe, and that all that is, is an expression of the Divine Intelligence in that one life, will reply with Walt Whitman: "To me there is nothing but miracle." That is true; but in the accepted sense a miracle is a variation of the accustomed order of this self-expression of the immanent Divine Intelligence. It is, therefore, an evidence of the ceaseless activity of the Universal

Soul to which attention is specially called, because this activity is manifested in an unaccustomed manner. We talk about the "laws of Nature"; there are no laws of Nature. By the laws of Nature we can only mean the aggregate of observed phenomena, all of which phenomena are equally miraculous, though, being familiar, they excite no surprise. We are accustomed to the vibrations of the creative thought of God acting continuously in one direction, and we call it a law. If this vibration of the creative thought of God acts in an unusual manner, and brings about something we have never seen before, we call it miracle. If, for example, I were striving to illustrate the law, as we call it, of gravitation, and buried in the ground some small oval pebbles, they would never come up. If amongst them there were one acorn, it would defy the law of gravitation which kept down the pebbles, and it would rise from the ground. But it would not be a violation of the law of gravitation; it would be the vibration of the thought of God that regulated the vital force of the acorn, superseding the vibration of the thought of God that regulated the gravitation that kept down the pebbles. If, however, it had happened once only in human history, and had been recorded in the New Testament, it would be called a miracle, and probably ridiculed and denied. Now, assume that in the fullness of time the Universal Soul would specially manifest the nature and character of His Immanence in one

perfect specimen of the human race, that perfect specimen of the human race could in no better way prove His Identity with the Universal Soul, to the dim-eyed and the unspiritual, than by exhibiting His perfect knowledge of, and control over, these various natural forces and activities that we call the laws of Nature. For this purpose, that He might prove that all the power of the Infinite Spirit was embodied in Him, the Lord Jesus wrought a few of these signs or miracles. He seems to have wrought them unwillingly, as a last resort, when men could not or would not recognize from His character and His words His fulness of the Divine Spirit. "If ye will not believe My words," He said, "believe Me for My works' sake"; and they did. Their wonder was excited. "Who is this," they said, "that the winds and the sea obey Him?" Thus, miracle is knowledge. The phonograph, the telephone, wireless telegraphy, would have been witchcraft in the days of the Stuarts, and miracles to our grandfathers. Professor Huxley once, in the *Agnostic Annual*, warned the youthful opponents of revealed religion to be cautious in their attacks upon miracle. Predicate, he said (I am not quoting his words, but this was the substance of them)—predicate a human being with absolute knowledge of every secret interior process and molecular arrangement of Nature, of every movement and counter-movement, and he would be able to control, subordinate, transfigure, retard,

accelerate these processes, and, in short, do all that Jesus of Nazareth is reported to have done. But be it noted that no man could have such perfect knowledge were He not an exceptional and peculiar incarnation of the Eternal Logos, or Reason of the Infinite Spirit called God. Therefore, the miracles of Jesus were credentials of His Godhead.

There is much to be learnt from this miracle. For example, it is a powerful appeal for human confidence. "Follow Me, trust Me," says the Omnipotent Friend of man; "take risks for Me fearlessly, accompany Me into foodless places; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Then the *motive* of the miracle is so noble, so God-like, "I have compassion," He said. It is a revelation of the permanent attitude of the mind of God, and God's compassion is not a sentiment but an activity. It is compassion, intense compassion, not anger, that the Mother-Soul feels for us when we are blind, foolish, insubordinate. And it is for us also to cultivate compassion; it will make our souls noble and God-like. The small measure of compassion we possess is a mirror of God's heart; it is "that we have the likest God within our souls." And let it be not a sentiment, but an activity. Let us strive to make the world a little happier for man, woman, child, animal, and we shall not have lived in vain.

Again, how suggestive is the *material* of the miracle! He did not send legions of angels to

the bakers' shops at Capernaum to fetch bread! He asked for their own supply, however inadequate, to be placed into His hands, that it might be empowered, vivified, multiplied by the magic of His touch. We need nothing added to us from without; we have enough of the Divine gift of the Christ nature in us to perfect ourselves and to feed others if we will only truly place it into His hands. When He bids us take our place in the brotherhood of the race, and feed others spiritually and intellectually, it is of no avail to plead the poverty of our natural endowments, the meagreness of our possessions, the limited sphere of our influence. He says: "Place that small store into My hands." In other words, call upon the Christ within you, blend your Christ nature with the Christ around you, above you, beside you, and reason, affection, imagination, influence will be new-born, as when St. Paul said: "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

But the point that I desire specially to emphasize as a solace to the restlessness of some earnest souls, disappointed at the continuance of an unsatisfied desire for God, is this: The feeding of the four thousand in the wilderness is an illustration of the blessedness of being hungry, apparently hopelessly hungry, in His company. And you are always in His company. "Blessed are they that hunger," He says. He does not say, Blessed are they who think they have attained, blessed are the

theologically replete, the complacently satisfied, but " Blessed are they that *hunger*." Obviously I am referring to the inwardness of the saying, to soul-hunger, to the intense longing to know more of the Absolute, the Everlasting Being, and of His relation to us ; and this is a hunger that is intolerant of delay, that often causes fret and worry, that savours almost of doubt, that cries impatiently : " My soul is athirst for God ; yea, even for the living God." Some of these hungry ones are, I know, often listening to me in St. John's Church, and I know also that their attitude is one almost of resentment against the Eternal for so hiding Himself, and of dissatisfaction with themselves for harbouring this resentment. I want to assure them that this unconquerable Godward restlessness is the purest and deepest desire that they can know ; that this hunger is health, not disease ; and that the Lord Jesus was definitely including them when He said : " Blessed are they that hunger." There are, I know, many churchgoers who hunger not. They have scant appetite for thought-excursions into the Infinite, and exploring suggestions. They dislike metaphysics and philosophy, and rather resentfully expect a preacher to confine himself to Church dogma and personal morality. I doubt not that there is a useful place for such teaching : " Dearly beloved, believe the Creeds ; be moral, and go to church "; but the truly hungry starve under this diet. He was a shrewd student of human psychology

who once said that the school of thought to which a preacher belonged was betrayed by his selection for use of one of three words—"She," "It," or "Him." If he spoke of "She," he indicated the Anglican branch of Holy Catholic Church, with all its noble traditions, dogmas, and formularies, to be accepted on authority, without question, reasoning, or mental reservation. If he spoke of "It," he referred to an infallible, Divinely dictated Book called the Bible, which was to be accepted without criticism, without inquiry, without rational consideration as to alteration of time, circumstance, and environment, and be considered as the sole means of communication between God and man. If he spoke of "Him," the preacher was referring to the all-filling, all-creating, universally diffused Individuality, expressed and manifested in all that is, and whose most transcendent revelation is in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is clear that these three bases of exhortation, blended and rationally interpreted, embrace the whole philosophy of religion, and quite recently I warned the winged ones against the mistake of rashly flying away from the protection of the first. And as to the two attitudes indicated by the words "She" and "It," are they not valuable soul hospitals on the rudimentary plane? Have they not produced, and are they not producing, saintly lives? It is only when they lead to intellectual stagnation, and produce an attitude

of moral repletion, and condemnation of other people, that it may be well to disturb those abiding in them, for when souls are pre-eminently self-satisfied, and cease to be hungry, they are outside the Beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger."

Suppose, as an illustration, that some of the multitude who followed the Lord Jesus into this prairie possessed privately a store of food of some kind, and were replete with that sustenance, while the others were famished, they would not have been candidates for the compassion and the miracle of Jesus; they would have looked on with the indifference of repletion and the fastidiousness of abundance upon that huge mass of barley loaves. No blame, that I can see, would attach to them, but they wouldn't happen to fit into the category: "Blessed are they that hunger."

Now let us for a moment analyze that hunger which distresses some of you. It is a sharp pang, that blessed restlessness, that inarticulate yearning of the home-sickness of a human soul beginning to realize that it was not created when it was born, but somehow came forth from the Absolute and longs to discover the way back. What is it? It is the well of water within you (of which Jesus spoke), springing up into everlasting life. I thank the Lord for this analogy; it is most suggestive. The Divine Nature in man is curiously like the little clear stream bubbling forth from the chalk hills, and commencing its pilgrimage to the ocean.

Whence came that stream ? That bubbling forth from the chalk hills was not its origin ; that was its birth into natural conditions. It came from the universally diffused, invisibly suspended moisture. Thence it was precipitated as rain, and soaked into the earth, and then appeared differentiated as that spring, bound within the limitations of banks, destined to work its way through the obstructions of earth till it reaches the sea, when it will once more be evaporated by the sun and return whence it came. It does a useful, cleansing, beautifying, refreshing work between the birth of its precipitation on to the earth and the grave of its pouring into the sea. Read Tennyson's "Brook." See how it nourishes "here and there a speckled trout, and here and there a grayling"; how here it nourishes into surpassing beauty a million turquoise-tinted forget-me-nots, and there masses of golden king-cups; how here it moves a mill-wheel, and there extinguishes a fire. And then it joins the "brimming river," which is made up of a thousand such streams. Its isolation is gone ; it now moves on in increased volume in the solidarity of the water, and at last it reaches the sea, and under the drawing power of the sun it ascends, its work done, to the centre whence it came forth.

No analogy is complete, and this analogy fails in the fact that the particular river, as that particular river, ceases to be itself when it returns whence it came, and we, when consciously identi-

fied with universal life will not lose the sense of our separate individuality; but it is a lovely picture of the ceaseless hunger and progress of the awakened Divine Nature, steadily increasing, cutting its way through obstacles, fertilizing the earth-life through which it passes, joining the "brimming river" the unity of the race, and then disappearing into the ocean which men think of as death, to be received again into the bosom of the Absolute—

"When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home."

But observe: restlessness, hunger, constant hunger, first to "join the brimming river," then to be poured into the sea, then to be lifted to the clouds, is the stimulus of its progress. Duty between its banks is the law of its being. Feeble, as at times it seems, swerving far out the direct line to the sea when the soil is too hard for it to cut its channel, behind it always is the driving power of the irresistible law of gravitation that "keeps the earth a sphere"; nothing can frustrate its ultimate destiny. It came out from suspended moisture into the limitations of its banks. It *must* leave the limitations of its banks and return to suspended moisture. We are not inanimate like the stream, but, similarly, behind us is the driving power of the mighty, evolving purpose of the Omnipotent. It is within us. We are generally as unconscious of possessing and being

possessed by this irresistible power as the stream is unconscious of the law of gravitation. But the hunger we feel is an evidence of its presence. Let us "reckon ourselves" alive to this power; acknowledge it, claim it, say, "It is mine"; then let us act as if we felt it, and we shall advance in power, and the indwelling Christ will increase in volume day by day.

So, may I say, give up worrying and thinking you are in danger of becoming an Agnostic because you are hungering. Mentally enthrone the Universal Soul alone behind and above and within all worlds. Consolidate all speculations, theories, problems into the perfect optimism of the poet's words, and believe that—

> "All nature is but art unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good;
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear—whatever is is right."

Know what the Absolute *must* be by the testimony of the deepest and truest within yourself. And if the fact that even in the best of men there is so much of the admixture of the lower nature that the Divine Image is blurred, then fall back on the answer given by the one Perfect Man to Philip when, like you, Philip hungered for a vision of the Absolute: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In other words, given a specimen of the human race, in whom identity with the

Absolute in thought, will, feeling, and action is perfect, and you have as full a revelation of the essential nature of the Absolute as is possible in these finite earth conditions. And to that "Jesus-aspect" of the Universal Father we can lift up our hearts in prayer and say to Him, many times in a day :

"Lead us in Thy truth and teach us, for Thou art the God of our salvation ; upon Thee we desire to wait all the days of our life."

THE PRE-NATAL PROMISE

"The Eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."—EPH. i. 11.

"Promised before times Eternal, but in His own season manifested."—TITUS i. 2.

THESE two passages of Scripture provide a characteristic Epiphany motto, for Epiphany is essentially the festival of the abolition of limitations of time, space, creed, nationality from the everlasting Christ—the protest of the Spirit of God against all narrowness, and all cramped, unworthy conceptions of Divine Love. And it is a New Year's motto, inasmuch as it is one of those inspired, enlarging epigrams which, when thankfully apprehended, affect with surpassing power the practice of human life.

Epiphany is manifestation, and manifestation is bringing into the sphere of visibility and recognition something previously existing, but hitherto unknown—something promised, perhaps, "before times Eternal."

It is not possible to exhaust the self-revelation of God implied by the Epiphany. But two illimitable Eternal truths are specially Epiphanized

by the Christ, and are discoverable from His characteristic actions and words which are selected for record in the appointed Scriptures of this season. The first is the Immanence of God in man, the inseverability of the human and the Divine, the assurance that the spirit in man is the direct offspring of the supreme Spirit, that in God " we live and move and have our being," that beyond and beneath the clouds and vexations and second causes of this age of elementary education there is ever working, silently but surely, a Supreme Will, and power, and purpose, promise that makes for perfection, transforming water into wine, lower into higher, weaker into stronger, rudimentary into complete. And the second is the pre-eminently practical truth that this revealed relationship to God implies corresponding obligations and responsibilities : that if the poor human shadow of nobility, the nobility of ancestry, is understood to impose an obligation on the heir not to disgrace his forefathers, or shame the name he bears—if we even adapt a French saying, *noblesse oblige,* the force of the obligation on those who become conscious of Divine sonship and of their hereditary right to the throne of the universe is immeasurably greater, and that the faintest dawning on the soul of this transcendent truth will force from the lips the utterance, " Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business ?" Both these Eternal truths are implied in the passages I have quoted,

and provide a thought of assurance for a New Year. The beginning of a year is one of God's milestones in the onward struggle of human life ; every pilgrim who is not utterly sunk in indifference, frivolity, unbelief, thirsts for a word of cheer—an uplifting thought—a rally back upon an eternal veracity—a measure of the Divine oil that feeds the flame in the silver lamp of optimism. The future is all uncertain ; its probable perils are beyond our ken ; its problems are intricate ; the riddle of this painful earth is as insoluble as ever ; " the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain." Careworn travellers on life's journey on all sides cry, " Give us of your oil, for our patience is failing, our lamps are going out." We are weak, sinful, dim-eyed, the passage of a year emphasizes the dread regularity with which silent Time steals on his everlasting journey ; we look in distress from our imperfect lives to the perfect standard, from human attainment to Divine requirements, and we are full of anxious forebodings.

First, praise the Lord for Divinely implanted dissatisfaction with the imperfect, for that instinctive longing for the perfect which constitutes the healthy growing pains of the Godward life. But *sursum corda*, lift up your hearts ; base the life at the beginning of this New Year upon the sure word of Him who cannot lie ; rise out of the dream of the unreal, the illusion of the phenomenal, the deception of second causes, and for

once let God be true and every man who contradicts Him a liar ; you are part of the Eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord " before times Eternal." To bid a congregation be honest, sober-minded, self-controlled, would be both a platitude and an impertinence. To adjure each other as items in the Eternal purpose of the Creative Mother-Soul ; to live bravely and confidently in that faith ; to shape our lives as our Father's sons ; to trust, to hope, to endure, to claim in all times of crisis and temptation the supernatural life of the God whose we are, and whose we can never cease to be, as an aid to our sinning enfeebled humanity—this is to appeal to each other upon God's plan for our development, and to point out the road to progress. Our success in the days which are before us, if we live this year out, will certainly be in the exact measure of the reality and constancy of our communion with the highest. I know I speak the truth here ; we may have irksome duties to perform, troublesome habits to conquer ; we may start with new resolutions ; we may wear ourselves into exhaustion by our merely human efforts at self-improvement, and we shall fail apart from the Divine Power which worketh in us. But this—this is the victory that overcometh, even our faith ; and faith is the appeal to the Divine Power within, possessed always, everywhere, by all.

Now follows a question I desire to ask you :

What do you understand by the expression "before times Eternal"? To whom could God give a promise "before times Eternal"? Put the question thus: Epiphany's time-honoured story of the star leading the Zoroastrians across the wilderness to Bethlehem is an analogy of the Father-Soul influencing human hearts, inspiring human aspirations. There is always a star leading to the goal of life. Now, in this secret process of influencing human volition, to what does the Parent-Soul mainly appeal? Of course, every human faculty is appealed to, but to what special faculty in man is the main and ultimate appeal made?

Consider the sentence I have quoted from St. Paul; it is one of his later writings when "such an one as Paul the aged," "promised before times Eternal." The Greek is *πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων*; the expression is limitless in its suggestiveness. First, note the use of the celebrated word *Aionios*, around which has raged the controversy as to the duration of after-death chastening, and which has been wrongly translated "everlasting," thus perverting the whole meaning of the last verse of Matt. xxv.

Chronos aionios—"age time," or "times Eternal"—is, according to this passage, certainly *not* God's extended, never-ending existence, but a period projected from God in which certain things were to happen. If there can be a before-œonian time, it is perfectly obvious

that there can be an after-œonian time, and to predicate of the word " œonian "—never-ending —is therefore both unscriptural and irrational.

But St. Paul tells us that a promise was given—a promise of the knowledge of the truth—before these " Eternal times." To whom was the promise given ? A promise to be supporting and to afford a basis of appeal must be made, not to a race or to human nature in the abstract, but to individuals. All God's dealings are personal; each several human being is dealt with by Him as though the only one living, and therefore, in a sense, the full understanding of which has been hidden from us, this promise must have been made " before time Eternal " to each one of us.

Obviously we are thinking out of our depth, for no man can define his own individuality. He knows himself to be a complex bundle of contradictions, an example of the words of Young, in his " Night Thoughts " :

> " How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
> How complicate, how wonderful is man—
> Helpless immortal, insect infinite, a worm, a God !"

But he is also profoundly conscious that, as Browning says :

> " There is an immortal centre in us all,
> Where truth abides in fulness."

His highest thought of himself is that he is a spirit, for awhile incarnated that he may be educated for a higher life in a purer world : that

is the utmost that he can know, and fortunately we are not concerned to place into definitions what our Father has seen fit to leave unexplained.

But Holy Scripture speaks with no uncertain sound. In Eph. i. 4 we read: "God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world"; in 2 Tim. i. 9 we read: "God saved us and called us according to grace given to us in Christ Jesus before times Eternal"; and here, in Titus i. 2, we read, "promised before times Eternal." Though we cannot explain, we are perfectly justified in drawing legitimate inferences according to the laws of thought, and we may ask: Why are men haunted, possessed, with the instinct of some dim, far-back, forgotten experience? Whence came the deeply rooted belief amongst a certain section of the Jews of a past condition of being which led them to question the Saviour as to whether a man was born blind because he had sinned in a previous life—a question which He refused to answer? Whence the inspiration of Wordsworth's well-known thought—

"Not in entire forgetfulness, and not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home"?

Whence the sweet legend of the Talmud, that the dimple on the upper lip of every human being was made by God's finger when, after putting His immortal child into the training school of the world, He whispered into the ear of each, "It is well; thou art Mine," and then pressed His

finger on the lip to prevent his speaking of it? Whence that thought of Addison—

> "'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us;
> 'Tis Heaven itself that intimates eternity to man"?

We know that this instinct of a forgotten past has been weighed, taken to pieces, analyzed. One of the leading scientists of our age has tried to trace it to the duality of the brain, to an impression striking one lobe of the brain a thousandth of a second before the other, and so giving us an impression of a previousness. Another able investigator has attributed it to hereditary memory; he affirms that these transient flashes that seem to imply a forgotten past are merely the inherited brain impressions of experiences of our ancestors; but when the Infinite Originator says, "promised before times Eternal," how do I know that the appeal of the Spirit of God to my soul, His dealing with my conscience, His awakening of my fears, may not be an appeal to this very promise, my recollection of which has been put to sleep by the "drowsy syrups of the world" in which it is my duty to exist?

All who have had a long experience of the ministry have witnessed many awakenings, hardly two the same: some apparently sudden; some a slow development into new principles, new motives, new thoughts, new actions. In every case—I speak from my own experience—they have suggested the awakening to the conscious-

ness of something always possessed, but never before recognized. It has seemed more as if it were God's finger touching some hidden chord, and awakening some long-forgotten memory, appealing to some far-back promise, some melody, perhaps, learnt in the condition of mystery whence we came "trailing clouds of glory" and which that which Owen Meredith calls "Matter's dense opaqueness" prevents our recollecting clearly.

So "promised before times Eternal" seems like an appeal to a memory—that treasure-house of the mind of which the key is not held by us. Memory, mysterious memory, sometimes awakened with an overwhelming rush by the perfume of a flower, or the bar of some long-forgotten tune with, as Longfellow says, "a tear in every line." Let a man define to me physical memory before he ventures to define or limit or deny what I am suggesting as the possibility of a spiritual memory. We have all heard how, in one of the Indian wars of the last century, a child was stolen and brought up amidst the Indians, far from home and friends. She had forgotten her name, her language, her parents. When the American Government made peace with the Indians, the captives were brought back and restored to civilization, but no one was able to recognize this girl; she knew no one, and no one knew her; her memory was a blank. An anxious mother, instinctively feeling relationship with

her, sought in vain for some token by which she might identify her child, but all attempts failed. At last the mother began softly to sing to the girl a hymn she had taught her child in early infancy. She sang it again and again ; as the cadence rose and fell, there came a wistful look into the child's eyes ; it slowly changed into recognition. The memory of the childhood's song had broken the spell ; she was " born from above " to love and home and hope and happiness, and rushed into her mother's arms.

May it not possibly be thus that the Holy Spirit of the Mother-heart of God sings the song of home into the spirit of the wandering, alienated and earth-bound children of men, striking a secret chord within the heart, and calling it to the converted life ? Who shall say ? Who is there who does not know something of that mystic thrill when God is feeling for the heart-strings ? That whisper of the Eternal singing a song of the spirit's childhood, in the dark hour of the night, in some sorrow ? We have perhaps recoiled from it, resisted it ; we have thought, " How sharp the point of this remembrance is !" But, " See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." Perhaps our Spirit-Father is whispering to the affections and the emotions, seeking to interweave our life with His, and that is heaven.

" Promised before times Eternal." The promise obliterated by the Lethe of human birth and life, the slumbering memory of the promise

quickened and appealed to by the Spirit of God! Do you ask what possible bearing upon practical ethics there can be in a speculation so remote, so esoteric, so profound? Practical ethics! They are the ethics of the magistrate's bench. The morals of "thou shalt not" are the morals of the police-court, not the morals of the Kingdom of Heaven. The morals of character arise only from considerations that touch the springs of action. Whatever regenerates nature, *ipso facto*, transfigures conduct. Pascal, in his "Pensées," says: "Beyond doubt, the recognition of immortality makes the entire difference in morals; it is dangerous to prove to a man how nearly he is on a level with the brutes without also showing him his greatness." Yes, his greatness; and I contend that whatever tends to intensify the conviction of the elemental inseverability of God and man; whatever suggests to the soul its hidden capacities, its truly intense powers; whatever convinces man that within him abides an hereditary germ of a Divine humanity, that can never die and never be disintegrated, affects, and must affect with surpassing power, the practice of his life. It teaches him to live for eternity; it crushes pessimism out of his heart; it leads him to see in every trial, in every disappointment, the working out of the Father's promise of a nobler manhood; it says to him: "Rise to the consciousness and the dignity of your noble origin and lofty destiny. You belong to God; you are heir

to a throne. You came forth from the Father and came into the world. Look unto the rock whence you are hewn, forget not your lineage, your responsibility, in a self-sought degradation, yield yourself unto God." Moreover, it tends to the dissemination of practical ethics, for it calls a man irresistibly to work with unwearied compassion amongst brother-souls who, like himself, have come forth from God, and whose true citizenship also is above, "whence they came." The man who thinks profoundly along these lines that unlock the secret of the universe—the lines that reveal God as the Responsible Originator calmly working out a purpose—will be keen and eager in the work of striving to rescue his fellowmen—to remove the causes of their degradation. He will recognize himself as projected for awhile into the atmosphere of this planet for purposes of education, and, believing in his origin and destiny, he feels himself to be like the native pearl-diver on the coast of Borneo: down into the choking waters does the pearl-fisher plunge, with his net-basket round his waist, holding his breath, hastily gathering as many pearl-bearing shells as he can reach, and after three, or at the outside four, minutes, he is drawn up again, and presents the pearl-bearing shells that he has gathered to his master. He would die if he stayed there, and if he did not work while he was there, his plunge into the deep waters would be wasted.

"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's

business ?" said the God-inhabited Child of Mary when He realized His union with the Father. Practical ethics as the immediate result of recognition of Divine Parentage is the lesson of that utterance—an instantaneous liberation from the material plane, following upon a clear vision of spiritual truth. " As He is so are we in this world," said St. John, comparing the Christian worker with the great Saviour of Souls, who " came out from the Father and came into the world " to find for Himself the pearl of great price—the uplifting of humanity—and again " left the world and went unto the Father."

We, too, have come from the Infinite. We cannot stay long under the waters of this world ; threescore years and ten—less, far less, in comparison with Eternity, than the four minutes of the pearl-fisher. Is our net-basket filling with pearls ? In the day when " He shall make up His jewels " will there be in His crown some that we have found for Him under this life's stormy sea ? The motto of one who believes in the possibility of this interpretation of St. Paul's words will be : " I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

WHERE TO FIND THE LORD

"How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"—LUKE ii. 49.

EPIPHANY is the revelation of the limitless immanence of the Spirit of God in the whole universe, but specially in man, a transcendent example of which immanence in man is provided for our contemplation in the Lord Jesus, who, through His acts and words which are grouped together in the Epiphany Gospels, manifested to His disciples the effulgence and the glory of His Divine attributes.

Each Epiphany Gospel relates one of the signs which He gave as credentials of His divinity, and the Gospel for the first Sunday after Epiphany directs our attention to the God-inhabited Hebrew boy in the midst of the Rabbis in the Temple, "both hearing them and asking them questions." And the thought-excursion suggested by the special sign of this Sunday appears to me to be included in the question He addressed to Joseph and His Mother, "How is it that ye sought Me?"

This question, and the circumstances that led to it, seem to me to suggest to the imaginative faculty three considerations, the first on the surface plane of thought, the others striking a deeper note :

1. Where Jesus ought to be found, conveying a lesson on the simple plane of the ethics of daily life ;

2. Where Jesus always may be found, which takes us into a profounder sphere of thought ; and—

3. What is the logical result of seeking Him in the right place whether you consciously find Him or not.

1. Where Jesus ought to be found. Here we are on simple, homely grounds. It is recorded in an earlier verse, " They sought Him amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintances, and found Him not." Remembering that there is always a spiritual meaning under the letter of Scripture narrative, it is no fanciful application of this pathetic incident to say that under the inwardness of this sentence lies hid the secret of much domestic sorrow, the explanation of much hard, isolated, unsympathetic family life, the sickening experience of many an awakened soul, who, after entering into the knowledge of the Lord, has had to seek spiritual communion and friendship outside the family circle. It is because so many who profess and call themselves Christians keep the Christ, the Christ Spirit, the Christ attitude, the

Christ Presence, out of its proper place in the home, and when you seek for Him "amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintances" you find Him not.

The application of the thought is too obvious to need emphasizing. "Return," said Jesus to the exorcized Gadarene, "to thine own house, and show what God hath done for thee." It is as though He had said the first duty of a regenerate soul is at home, amongst kinsfolk and acquaintance; you will want more grace to witness amongst your own kindred than to strangers. The intuitive apprehension of the revelation of the Absolute in Jesus is not a dogma, nor a theory, nor a hypothesis, nor a dream: it is a spiritual power, a personal Presence, a controlling genius of life, a principle of action, an hourly consolation; and home-life is the very first test of its reality. If you would read the index of a life, if you would detect the ruling passion of a human soul, if you would know the true character, you must see it at home; you never really know the great men who have left the impress of their footmarks upon the sands of time until their biography has told you what they were at home. Why is this? Because in the home the restraints of external criticism are relaxed. A tired man who has returned to his home under some rebuff or disappointment takes off the mask he has worn before his fellows. He does not mean to be unkind, but in the freedom of his

home he is uncurbed ; he can blurt out what he will with impunity. It is not want of affection ; it is want of realizing that the Presence of the Christ of God, the humanity of the Absolute, "with us always to the end of the age," is a solemn mystery that challenges us every hour of life ; that Jesus, in all the love of His self-sacrificing heart, and all the purity of His transparent soul, is a visible witness of our domestic life ; and to know it, and to strive to live in the knowledge, would be to possess a controlling influence against that corroding mildew of home-life called temper, and the result would be domestic happiness. When the civilized world was ringing with Gordon's praises shortly after his death at Khartoum, his sister said to me, "No one knew what he really was until they knew him at home : the most considerate, the most affectionate, the most unselfish of men." Surely the first simple surface lesson from this incident is that it should be our effort to recognize, and that we are entitled to claim, a Presence which will blend with and sanctify and enhance a thousandfold the love of family life, and that without Him, without the breath of His inspiration, the spirit of His life, the restraint of His Presence, we can do nothing ; and the first simple thought from this Gospel should be the aspiration that of none of us may it be said, "They sought Him amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and found Him not."

The second consideration from that question,

" How is it that ye sought Me ?" takes us into deeper waters. " Wist ye not that I must be," the Greek is, *en tois tou Patros mou*, which is translated in the Revised Version " in My Father's house," and in the Authorized Version " about My Father's business." Both translations are full of profound meaning. " In My Father's house." What is the inwardness of this expression ? What is " My Father's house " ? What is the supreme dwelling-place of God ? The enlightened mind replies at once, the entire universe ; " there is one body," the sum-total of all that is, and " one Spirit," the all-creating soul, life, love of the universe. Everywhere is " My Father's house." True, in a sense the whole wondrous universe is His house, and the ceaseless reproducing generative power which throbs in every blade of grass and uplifts every seed is the expression of His immanence and His activity. It is a deep mystery how God and matter blend, how the pulsation of His life through all things constitutes the pulse of life in all that is ; the universe is God's hiding-place, as it is also God's manifestation. But the depth and fullness of this revelation and its influence upon human progress will be in proportion to our capacity to grasp the thought that this one life, in all and through all and above all, expresses itself in different degrees, and that its highest expression is man. " My Father's house " in its highest meaning is man ; as Chrysostom says, " the true

Shechinah is man." "The Temple of the Lord is holy, which Temple ye are." The Absolute is immanent in man as the Logos, the self-utterance of God, hidden from all men, and yet in its measure the experience of all men. The Lord Jesus is the perfect example of this immanence, and "as He is so are we in this world." In every human being there is a share, a germ of this Divine nature, the same in kind, though not the same in degree. In the Lord Jesus it was in fullness, such transcendent fullness that He was able to speak of it as "the Father in Me." "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" is as though He had said, "How is it that ye seek Me only as an objective human enclosure of the Divine, as something apart from you, outside you? Look within; search your inmost, profoundest self; find, cherish, train within yourself the ray of the Divine light which is your Eternal Ideal humanity, for God's life in man is the secret of the Lord and the source of man's eternal assurance." What an amazing, subduing consideration it is—the Father's house myself! My body a temple of the Lord! How can I climb to that high plane of thought? How can I keep there? As I am but a humble seeker myself, I have no direct answer to the question, but I can perceive that there are two ways of knowing truth: the one is through the senses and the intellect; the other is through awakened spiritual intuition. The Lord recognized these two

methods, and contrasted them when He said, "A little while and ye shall behold Me no more," using the word *theorite*, referring to physical sight through the bodily organs, "and again a little while and ye shall Me see," using the word *opsesthe*, which implies the mental vision of the awakened intuitions. Intellect starts from its own self-consciousness, and uses logic as its instrument of investigation. Spiritual intuition starts from the dawning of a perception of a higher self which stimulates an indefinable upward yearning. Intellect argues up to God; it seeks Him everywhere, outside itself, and it finds Him. Spiritual intuition, on the other hand, starts with the perception that God does not need to be sought, that He has never been absent from us, and the function of the human will is to cooperate with this perception and strive to become conscious of the Divine operation within.

I suppose the road is the old one of auto-suggestion, St. Paul's "Reckon yourself," identify yourself with the essential truth, and not the sense illusion of your being. Intellect will convince you by strict logic, if you follow the laws of thought, that the creative universal life must be immanent in you, and spiritual intuition will encourage you mentally to claim the Divine inheritance, not as something which you will one day become, but as something which you now are.

Yes, every believer ought to be "God manifest

in the flesh." When you see purity, honour, goodness, chastity, sweetness of spirit, and strength of principle in a human face, you are looking upon God ; the glow of the Divine Indweller is shining through the windows of His house, His temple. Might not Jesus, who is the visible embodiment in perfection of that Divine potency immanent in germ in each one of us—might He not say, when we are worrying over the insoluble problems involved in the different presentations of religious truth, when we cry out, " We have sought Thee sorrowing through systems of thought and schools of theology ; we have consulted experts in doctrinal casuistry, and we have found Thee not "—might He not say, " How is it that ye sought Me ? Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house ?" Thou wilt find Me striving within thy inmost, the deeply hidden germ in every man, the heart's Son first, the heart's Lord afterwards. If you will but face life with the knowledge that God's nature in you is your unfailing assurance and strong consolation, " the mystery hid from the foundation of the world " revealed in Jesus, " Christ in you the hope of glory," your life would be reconstituted.

But let the translation stand as it is in the Authorized Version, " Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business ?" and it teaches virtually the same lesson, and affords consolation to those who cannot climb to the higher con-

ception. It teaches that Jesus, the Jesus Spirit, the Christ nature, the activity of the Logos, is to be found wherever human beings are associating themselves with the Father's business, and the Father's business is the evolution of the race ; dealing with sympathy and helpfulness with cases of misery and ignorance. How is it that ye seek Him in speculative researches into what theologians call the hypostatic union ; in casuistic, hair-splitting definitions of mysteries beyond your ken ; in adherence to traditional shibboleths ? How is it that ye seek Him in bitter controversies as to the precise method of His entering by Incarnation into the world which He made, and in which He has always been immanent ? The Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. Ye shall find Me wherever My Father's business is enterprised ; I shall be there whether ye find Me or not.

This is the meditation of my heart to-day, and it is not unpractical, for where the immanence of the Christ in the race has become an influential conviction as well as an intellectual hypothesis, it will be found to lie very deep amongst the springs of action. If you are once truly liberated from the Calvinistic mildew that infests many theologies and impoverishes many religions, and have become convinced that humanity is the Son of God, that humanity was in the beginning with God ; that Jesus, who is God manifested and man interpreted, is the example and prophecy

of a universal fulfilment ; that the one perfected Son of God is the Archetype and forerunner of every son of God, you will realize, as perhaps you never realized before, that Christ has not effected some great thing instead of you, but in the truest sense for you, that you, in conjunction with Him, may effect it also ; that whosoever hath this hope in Jesus purifieth himself even as Jesus is pure ; that, though the fact that one member of the race has gained the victory over every form of unsubdued nature is the promise of Our Father that the triumph is virtually assured to all, this triumph can only be effected through individual courage, conflict, and resistance, and that the whole duty of man is really expressed in Tennyson's lines :

> " Arise and fly the reeling faun, the sensual feast,
> Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die."

Let us go forth, then, as heaven-born children, as immortal mortals into the unknown of this New Year, convinced that we have a citizenship in heaven, and a mission from the Father. Let us bear in mind that the obligation of sonship is that Divine constraint, " I must be about My Father's business." Let us go forth into the work of relieving misery, righting wrong, uprooting corruption, stemming the tide of depravity, helping on the evolution of the Divine sonship of the race. And then, though sorrow and pain and

disappointment may await us, as everywhere they awaited the Perfect Elder Brother, what matter if we know that our life be "hid with Christ in God," and that the indwelling Christ has promised, "Ye *shall* be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect"?

THE STORM

"Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."—MATT. viii. 26.

THEN He arose. Who is the "He," who commands the wind and the sea, and they obey Him? Who occupies this unrivalled position in human history? Why does He thus control Nature and govern the ideas, the aspirations, the actions of millions of mankind? There is no secret connected with Him for those who are liberated from limitations. The philosophy of the Christian revelation has long since answered the question He put to the Pharisees: "What think ye of the Christ?" We recognize that He is the highest expression of the Unconditioned Intelligence that we call God. As a proposition, the Infinite Originator whom we call God is unthinkable, because our finite minds cannot grasp boundlessness. God only becomes thinkable as He expresses Himself. The Eternal Reason, or Word, or Logos of the unthinkable God has expressed itself, uttered itself, in that which is visible, in the phenomena of the universe, in all creaturely life, in human beings, and, lastly, in

the fullness of time, this same Eternal Reason, or Word, or Logos, that down the ages had expressed itself in Nature, in conscience, in history, "became flesh and dwelt among us," embodied itself specifically in one human form, born of a woman. Therefore the "He" who arose and quelled the storm is the He who is the King, Son, and Lord of every heart, the unit of the universe, the objective manifestation of that subjective Reason or Logos of God, which is the immanent life in all things. "He arose and rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm."

Did He work what is conventionally called a miracle? Well, do I work a miracle if, after placing some irritant on an ailing body for medical purposes, when the pain and distress has done its work, I arise and soothe the irritated surface with some emollient, and there is a great calm? I am the agent in both cases. I have been both the cause of the irritation for a recognized purpose, and the producer of the calm when the purpose was fulfilled. But I have not worked a miracle.

Does it sound like a paradox to say that the "He" who arose was both the storm and the queller of the storm? An Oriental mind would take the thought in a moment. He, the Logos, the self-utterance of the Absolute, is the immanent energy of the universe. He is that all-inclusive Spirit whose consciousness is everywhere. "Without Him was not anything made that was made, and that which was made was life in Him." The

universe, with its unerring, unalterable, regularized working, is one aspect of the consciousness of the immanent Word or Logos. Not an atom of matter, not a wave of the sea, not a force in Nature, not an electron in the cosmos, ever has been or ever could be unfilled, unpossessed by the Word or self-utterance of the Absolute. In the fullness of time this Eternal Reason sought separate human enclosure in one spotless, perfect Being. The Logos did not cease to be everywhere because it was Incarnate in Jesus. He Epiphanized, manifested, His identity with the universal life by His power to modify or manipulate at will the phenomena of the universe inhabited by His all-vital spirit. It was like the consciousness of a man modifying, manipulating some part of his own body. "There is one body," the universe, "and one spirit," the immanent Logos, who for purposes of recognition was embodied in Jesus.

That ship in the storm, that arising at the right moment of the controlling power of the Incarnate God—what a splendid philosophical explanation it is of the puzzles that surround our education in this infant school of human life!

How conspicuously it frees you from the miserable materialism which down the ages has referred good and evil to different elemental creative sources. He and He alone is the immanent centre of all things. "I form the light, I create darkness, I make peace, I create evil, I the

Lord do all these things." In the midst of the apparent contradictions, antagonisms, and contrasts, there is only one principle at work, only one love pulsing, only one purpose evolving, only one end possible. Of course, I know this does not answer all the questions. Why the necessity for the agony, the soul-darkness of the storm? We do not and cannot know why, but reasoning by inference convinces us that without the storm the moral element in humanity would be lacking, that without a contrast goodness would have no significance in the conscious life of man. The Christ, the Christ-nature, the God-germ is within, in the ship, slumbering, waiting to be awakened. The storm, the suffering, the distress, the fear, causes the Divine within to be recognized, voluntarily chosen, obeyed. When the storm has done its work, He, who has always been there, arises, and there is a great calm.

It is easy to apply the teaching of that scene on the Lake of Galilee to God's way and will with the human race. It is His way and will in race development, in church activity, in individual growth. In race development it is the immanence of the Logos and the spirit of evolution that makes the storms. That massacre of unarmed men with women and children in St. Petersburg: it was the storm, the cyclone; it claimed many lives; for the immediate victims, one is assured that the Divine love travails in pain within them, and that their future will redeem their present, that

now they are in a better world than this endorsing the utterance of St. Paul—" I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed."

But what are the rulers doing? They are resisting and temporarily hindering the evolving force which is working out the purpose of God. You can no more reverse the progress of the race than you can crush back the soaring eagle into the egg. Humanity is not a machine, but an organism in which is implanted the germ of freedom, self-respect, self-government, equal rights, universal brotherhood. This germ is an aspect of the activity of the immanent Logos. Where, as in a wisely ruled, constitutionally governed country like England, this instinct is regulated, guided into useful channels, generalled by men of light and leading, it quietly, healthily advances, bearing fruit in new civil institutions and better social arrangements. The storm is not needed. Where it is sullenly and cruelly resisted, crushed by the tyranny of self-seeking despots, it accumulates force, and one day it bursts its barriers, and the whole social fabric totters with the shock.

" There is a wound, a grievous wound, that rankles in the heart
Of those who from homes and all by tyrant hands must part;
It never heals, but rankles on, like wind, now calm, now storm,
Till gathering strength, tornado-like, it bursts; then comes Reform.

In other words, when the evolutionary forces working out the slow-moving purposes of God have done their work, then He arises, and there is a calm. But the whole process has been the activity of His indwelling life, as certainly and as positively as is implied in the majestic declaration in Isa. xiv. : " I make peace, I create evil, saith the Lord, I the Lord do all these things." Precisely the same principle is at work in the development of Church activity. That ship in the storm is a close analogy of the Church of God, militant here on earth against every form of sin, and depending for her success upon the recognition and unfolding of a Divine life within her. The storms of the irreconcilable forces of evil beat against the Church, which is the national instinct of rectitude organized, exactly in proportion as she courts unpopularity by rebuking with unflinching severity the social sins of any age. The perpetual peril of the organization called the Church is to leave the Christ slumbering, and to strive to calm the storm by opportunism rather than principle, by pouring oil on the waves rather than by boldly battling through them ; to endeavour to mitigate the danger of losing her cargo by siding with the forces which produce the atmospheric disturbance of national immorality and degradation. The only true safety of the Church, both as regards her cargo, which is represented by her temporalities, and her crew, which is represented by the position in national life of her official

leaders, is to awaken within her the indwelling Christ, and manifest in power against the gigantic curses of the so-called civilization of the age, regardless of consequences. Then He arises, and there is a calm.

But the closest analogy of the ship in the storm on the Sea of Galilee is the individual man. (You will generally find that this mode of interpretation provides the key that unlocks the inmost of revelation.) Man, working his way across the sea of life from the mysterious shore of the eternity whence he came, to the equally mysterious further shore of the eternity into which he is going, propelled by the rowers of his natural faculties, his influential and automatic senses, his appetites, desires, and ambitions, steered by an instinctive Godward tendency called natural religion, which no race of men has ever been without, because natural religion is the immanence of the Logos; the force that moves the needle of the compass by which he steers being a kind of home-sickness that keeps him the only really restless animal that God has made, but possessing also somewhere a mysterious indwelling power, a Divine life, a "secret hid from the foundation of the world," a germ life of Divine Sonship, a guarantee of immortality, a hereditary relationship with God, a potentiality that St. Paul calls "the Christ in you, the hope of glory," very constantly left slumbering, unborn, unawakened, smothered by the desires and

ambitions of the lower nature, by lust, self-will, temper.

And what possible remedy has man in the cyclone of temptation when he is relying upon his own natural strength? "In me," says St. Paul, "that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing"—that is, nothing good enough to resist the tempest of passion. Is not sin a storm, a hurricane, a disfigurement of God's image, a producer of degraded bodies and wounded affections, of broken hearts and ruined souls? The whole phenomena of that bitter secret of the world tallies with the incidents of a tempest; the antagonism of currents of thought, the sense of oppression and distress, the consciousness of peril, as every safeguard of good resolution is torn down by the storm; it is only fools who make a mock at sin. The sensitive, the highly strung, the easily tempted, the men of good intentions, weak will, and strong passions, they know its agony, its thraldom, its reality. Praise the Lord! He is never so far off as even to be near. He is within, in the ship of life; our spirit is that which He holds most dear. Then goes up the eager cry, "Lord, save us, we perish." It is an appeal both within and without. It was Augustine who, in an illuminated moment, cried out, "O Felix culpa!" for the remedy is ever close at hand: where sin, there grace; where storm, there peace. It is the resolute concentration of mind upon the eternal realities which not only wakes up, quickens into

activity and conscious life the germ of the Christ within, but appeals to the saving power of the Christ without ; it not only appeals to the highest within, but it pleads with the Friend of sinners—"By Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death and burial, by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, good Lord, deliver me." And then shall He arise, the Sympathizer, the Healer, the Wonder-worker, the Indweller, the Mediator, the God who, as man for man, was tempted in all points like as we are ; and He says : "Place the ship of thy life in My hands, but for the future live in the spirit of recollectedness that I am in the ship of thy life, that I dwell in thee, that thou art My temple ; strive to remember that I am ever working to penetrate and sanctify thy inmost soul ; and now I will strengthen thee to resist sin for the future, and help thee to bear meekly the pain which the memory of sin brings." And thus does He rebuke the wind and the sea, and there is a great calm.

Carry the thought on for a moment to the other side. See Him in this morning's Gospel* throwing open the door into the world of spirits, and assuming without limitation the control of all forces and all beings, whether on this side of death or the other. I have spoken so often on the latter part of this Gospel that I need only allude to it. The Greek word *daimon*—here mistranslated devil—always, as you know, means disembodied

* The fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

human personalities; and that which is called possession or obsession, when the dæmon seems to influence the living, could not be without the permission of the Father of Spirits, and would appear to be an operation of the omnipotent compassion of Him who has said, "All souls are mine," intended in some way for the improvement of the dæmon by an abnormal kind of temporary identification with a purer human being. I am by no means a convinced believer in what is called obsession, but I have seen several cases that were called obsession, and they were always cases of pure, gentle souls.

The strange incident of the departure of the dæmons, with the permission of the Christ, into the bodies of the swine can only be judged from the standpoint of the responsibility and Fatherhood of God; and as God is the Father of the spirits of dead sinners, as truly as He is the Father of the spirits of living Christians, and as every action of His is remedial, and every permission of suffering intended to redeem and sanctify, this permission could only have been, because in the deliberate judgment of the Lord Jesus it was better for these debased human spirits so to taste the depths of degradation by being saturated with the swinish element that they could sink no lower, and in the very horror of the experience awaken to the agonies of a repentance which should be to them the beginning of the ascending life. No other interpretation is consistent with the all-

Fatherhood of God, and the loving, saving, remedial mission of the Christ. If this be so, then, the highest, the most consummate expression of the love of God in the Christian creed is contained in the article " He descended into Hades," or, in mystic language, " He crossed over to the other side," and the lesson is of unutterable consolation. Human nature can never descend so low as to be beyond the reach of the missionary activity and remedial resources of the Christ of God. If we sink to the lowest Hades, even there shall His love follow us, and His right hand hold us. He will come over to the other side to seek us amongst the lost. And even in the awful storm of the remedial discipline of the world beyond the grave, there shall come the moment when He will arise and rebuke the tempest, and there shall be a great calm.

PRAYING FOR THE DEPARTED

"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him."—LUKE xx. 38.

AS the years roll on, as human life wears away, Easter with its message becomes more to us than Christmas or any other festival of the Church. Why? Because the power of Easter is that it has converted hopes, speculations, aspirations into certainties. It has brought life and immortality to light. The universal instinct of survival in the human race has always lifted the minds of men beyond the silent barrier of the grave into an expectation of a continuity of existence after death, but the shadow of uncertainty has ever rested on the permanency of man's distinct individuality. This uncertainty our Father has taken away. It was the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of the Father to send forth, in the fullness of time, one perfect Son, the Elder Brother of humanity, the Type and prophecy of every member of the human family, who, after being trained by temptation and suffering, passed through the grave and gate

of death, and showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs, being seen, as St. Paul tells us, by above 500 brethren at once, the greater number of whom were alive at the time that he wrote.

Easter Day was the occasion of His first showing forth of His individual survival. It is a justifiable figure of speech to call Easter Day the day of His resurrection, but it is only a figure of speech, for He rose out of the limitations of His atomic body at the moment when He breathed out His life on the cross. But Easter Day was the day of His first visible appearance, and therefore upon that day we praise God that a future life is certain, that personality is deathless, that sundered hearts will be reunited. "I am He," Jesus said, "that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys"; and "because I live, ye shall live also." He lifted the doors of death and Hades, as it were, off their hinges, as Samson carried the gates of Gaza on his shoulders, and bid us look right through the dark valley into the life everlasting, and see our home, our fatherland, our mother-country, our beloved, waiting for us beyond and above the time experiences of this mortal life.

No grander, more comprehensive utterance of the Christ has been recorded than that authoritative anticipation of the revelation of Easter which I have quoted—"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him." The

utterance is prefaced with these words: "but that the dead are raised." It is the resurrection of which He is speaking, and He clearly, unmistakably identifies resurrection with continuity of individuality, and not with some future reconstruction of the atomic envelope in which the school-time of human experience has been passed. The whole thought of Easter, then, is *Sursum corda*—Lift up your hearts—rise out of Materialism; cease to identify yourself with your human body; affirm your ideal humanity; believe that God's life in you is your immortality, that life in the body is but a brief stage in an endless career, that there is a consciousness within you wholly independent of the body.

Professor Tyndall once said that consciousness without brain action was certainly conceivable, that atomic flux was its proof. He said the "chasm between brain action and consciousness is impassable. Here," he says, "is a rock upon which Materialism must split whenever it professes to be a complete philosophy of the human mind." Of course, it is utterly impassable so long as physiology seeks for the immaterial spirit in the convolutions of the brain. Let Materialism split upon its rock, and sink fathoms deep into oblivion; it has done good service by witnessing to the importance of the body; we can now do without it, as we can do without the swaddling clothes of our infancy. The material part of us has been in flux, like the water of a stream, or melting wax,

since we were born, and the whole time we have been conscious of continuous personal identity, and he who finds himself thinking, feeling, resolving, perceiving, after sixty years of atomic flux, knows that Materialism is an illogical dream, perceives that mental and moral activity cannot be arrested by the perishing of his outward mechanism, and recognizes the appropriateness of the teaching of the great Evolutionist, Jesus Christ, when He proclaims continuous progression, limitless development, unending conscious individuality for man in the words, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him."

Now, obviously, the applications of the great revelation of Easter which appeal to the power of the imagination are innumerable, but to-day I desire to emphasize one thought specially. In its universal aspect the revelation of Easter is an authoritative demonstration of the common spiritual bond uniting all men, whether in the body or out of the body, with each other and with the universal Father Spirit who thought us into being. And thus it encourages us in a sublime spirit of confidence to look with thought-eyes through the open door and realize our close union with the departed whom we have "loved long since and lost awhile."

"Do we know that they are alive?" asks one How do we know that they are alive? We know it because we are alive ourselves, and we are alive

because the immortality of God is embodied in our nature, and that Infinite, Creating, Upholding Life throbs through us and through them. Therefore we know that they are alive. God is love, and the motto of love is " for ever," and the logic of love is " there is no death." " God is not the God of the dead." All live unto Him ; so long as God lives man lives, for the immanence of God is the life of man.

I think we should sometimes try to force ourselves to realize this, for the law of spiritual growth is a profound conviction of a noble destiny and an unswerving certainty that the eternal will outlive the things of time. The exercise of this law is to force the imagination to behold the face of our Father which is in the heaven of the inmost—in ourselves and in all. It is to recognize in every aspiration, in every throb of dissatisfaction with what we are, our Father's promise of the nobler manhood He is evolving. The angels are what we are told they are because they " always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven." And the Kingdom of Heaven is within you ; to behold the face of our Father is to see in His inner promptings the Divine ideal which it is our function to recognize, obey, and develop until our lives become a normal expression of His immanence. Thus the teaching of Easter—that God's life is the common possession of man—uplifts and illuminates the race, and constant disregard of it, or hard materialistic disbelief in

it, is the doom of hope, the extinction of development, the sepulchre of motive.

Try sometimes and think this thought ; think that time is not running out for us into annihilation, but into development. Say to yourself, in some moment of silent meditation : " I live because God lives," " His Eternal Spirit is my true life," " His irrevocable purpose is my ultimate perfection." With one strong act of the will, withdraw from outward things into the secret of His presence, and then you shall see sins of thought and desire, and appetite, and temper, and pessimism fade as the bacilli of disease wither and perish in strong sunlight.

But now for the thought which I desire to emphasize. You ask me : Can we pray for the dead ? Ought we to pray for the dead ? I answer : This pulsing through man of a common Divine life is true of you, of me, of all men, while still in the flesh. Must it not be equally true, if not more true, of those who are no longer in the flesh, but living in the other sphere of being ? It was of men long dead that Jesus spoke these words, " God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Centuries had passed since the bodies of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had become resolved into their constituent elements, and mingled with the matter of the planet to be used by others. Yet the Lord speaks of them as alive, as risen. " Now that the dead are raised," He says : " God is the God of the living, for all live

unto Him"—some here, others in higher conditions, but all sharing the same life.

Those human spirits whose bodily covering was so dear to us are alive in personal identity, still united to us by the communion, the common life of the family of God. No suspension, even for a single moment, of the vital functions of the spirit is possible or conceivable, for "all live unto Him." What matter that they have passed temporarily from our sight? The urgent demands of human life often necessitate that kind of separation here. To watch the features of a loved one fading into invisibility as a great ocean steamer slowly increases her distance from the wharf is very like watching a death. One has beautifully said: "In the loss of friends and children we see the vine grow up by the side of the fence and pass over the top; the flower is on the other side." All of us have loved ones flowering on the other side—the little child whose frail life you saw breathed so sufferingly away, whose beloved form you laid in the grave, loath to part with it—

> "Before decay's effacing fingers
> Had marred the lines where beauty lingers."

The heart strains and yearns in the track of the loved spirit that has passed into another dimension of space as the heart strains and yearns, after the ocean steamer passing to another hemisphere; but you know that extinction has no more place in the one departure than in the other

—the child is flowering on the other side, in the sunshine, in the unclouded presence of the Universal Mother-Soul who is our life also. No—

> "They do not die
> Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
> Nor change to us."

And I confess that I cannot see in what our Christian religion is better than Materialism if we allow ourselves to change to them.

Do not yield for a single moment to that blinding superstition which would dare to silence your prayers for your loved ones so soon as the silver cord of physical life is loosed, and the golden bowl of visible embodiment is broken. Popish, is it? So much the better for Popery! Archbishop Magee, who was, above all things, a Protestant, wisely said: "Prayers for the progress of the departed abound in the early liturgies of the Church, and especially in connexion with the celebration of Holy Communion. To say that such prayers imply Popery is not only unjust and uncharitable, but in regard to our controversy with Rome extremely rash and unwise." I would add that it is more than rash and unwise: it is stupid Materialism. It is idle to question how they can be benefited. If the Infinite Mind can set free influences of good in response to our prayers here, though the whole process is a complete mystery to us, He is surely equally able to do so there; and if it is irrational to pray for our

fellow-men there, it is equally irrational to pray for them here; the common pulsation of God's life through them and through us constitutes the link between us there and here.

I want to encourage you to pray for the departed.

To pray for them links you to them. I believe that they are very near to us—in a sense nearer than when in the restrictions of the flesh—and that they are affected by our conduct and condition. What else do those tender words revealing the motherliness of God signify? Why does He wipe away their tears? Are there tears in Paradise? There is joy, we are told, when sinners repent. Must there not, therefore, be some regret when we are hardened? There must be a thrill of sympathy between us and them. The ascertained facts of physical science are tending ever more and more in the direction of breaking down the supposed antagonism between mind and matter, between natural and supernatural, and indicating that the communion of saints is not so much a theological expression as a natural law; for it is rapidly being demonstrated that mind can act on mind independently of the recognized channels of sensation. Call it mind-transference, or telepathy, or dynamic thought, or what you will, it is a fact that in some circumstances mind can influence mind without contact, without even proximity.

"Star to star vibrates light. So may soul to soul
Strike through a finer element of her own."

Let the believer in the revelation of Easter reverently concentrate determined thought upon one now in the spirit-world whose judgment on earth he greatly valued, not seeking that species of intercourse which encourages messages spelt by raps and knocks, but by projection of the mind into space external to itself, seeking at the same time communion with the Divine Spirit, and who shall deny the probability that the loved one we seek, whose affections are expanding in the fuller, freer life beyond the grave, can pour into our minds a stream of guiding, stimulating influence? We are surrounded, says St. Paul, by an innumerable cloud of witnesses. Amongst them are some of our closest and dearest—the mother who bore us, the father who taught us by his forbearing love what the love of God must be. Would they not cheer, encourage, console us if they could? Must they not grieve when we are hard, worldly, prayerless, impure, un-Christlike? And then, perhaps, their Father and our Father wipes away (metaphorically) their tears—I know not how — possibly by the assurance that, as they have fought and conquered, so shall we; that if they "wait but a little while longer in uncomplaining love, His own most gracious smile shall welcome us also above."

Thus is the possession of the common Divine life that death cannot sunder a truth that should awaken us to the dignity and blessedness of life, lift us into the sphere of eternal realities, help us

to live unto God earnestly, consciously, willingly, repentantly ; for our real home is with God and our true citizenship is in heaven, and " our God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him."

Finally, however intensely we believe in the inseverability of God and man, however irrefragably convinced we are that our beloved are alive, it is, as Byron says, " a fearful thing to see the human soul take wing." The agony of a recent bereavement is keen and passionate, and cannot reason coolly ; but it is our privilege and our duty not to " sorrow as those without hope." The nearer we get to the God within us, the nearer we are to our beloved departed. It will be but a little while and we shall be reunited. The revelation of the survival of the Christ encourages us to alter the agonizing " *good-bye* " of bereavement into the " *good-night* " of expectation, to say when they depart :

" Only good-night, beloved, not farewell,
A little while and all His saints shall dwell
In hallowed union indivisible,
Good-night.

" Until we meet before His throne,
Clothed in the spotless robes He gives His own,
Until we know as we are known,
Good-night."

Inasmuch as God is not the God of the dead but of the living, we are *sure—absolutely sure*—that—

" With the morn the angel face will smile
That we have loved long since and lost awhile."

The following prayer for the departed can be procured from Messrs. Vacher and Sons, Great Smith Street, Westminster :

" Our Heavenly Father, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, in whom all creatures live and move and have their being, in whatsoever world or condition they be ; I beseech Thee for *him* whose name and abiding-place and every need Thou knowest. Lord, vouchsafe *him* light and rest, peace and refreshment, joy and consolation in Paradise, in the companionship of saints, in the presence of Christ, in the ample folds of Thy great love. Grant that *his* life [so troubled here] may unfold itself in Thy sight, and find a sweet employment in the spacious fields of eternity.

" If *he* hath ever been hurt or maimed by any unhappy word or deed of mine, I pray Thee of Thy great pity to heal and restore *him*, that *he* may serve Thee without hindrance.

" Suffer *him* to know, O gracious Lord, if it may be, how much I love *him* and miss *him*, and long to see *him* again ; and if there be ways in which *his* influence may be felt by me, vouchsafe *him* to me as a guide and guard, and grant me a sense of *his* nearness in such degree as Thy laws permit.

" If in aught I can minister to *his* peace, be pleased of Thy love to let this be ; and mercifully keep me from every act which may hinder me from union with *him* as soon as this earth-life is over, or mar the fullness of our joy when the end of the days hath come.

" Pardon, O gracious Lord and Father, whatsoever is amiss in this my prayer, and let Thy will be done, for my will is blind and erring, but Thine is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

THE HOLY UNITY

"That they may be one, even as We are."

"That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, . . . that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."—JOHN xvii. 11, 21.

EVER since I acquired the habit of thinking, it has been my impression that "the doctrine of the Holy Unity" would have been a more appropriate title for the foundation dogma of the Christian Revelation than "the doctrine of the Holy Trinity."

First, because it is the perfect unity of the Supreme Being that ever requires defending and emphasizing.

And, secondly, because the absolute unity of the Divine nature, under diversity of manifestation, is authoritatively declared by our Lord, in the passages I have quoted, to be the pattern of the unity He requires amongst His followers.

First, let me speak of that which is called the "Mystery of the Holy Trinity."

To imagine that the human mind can detach itself by effort from externalism, and blend in worship with the Universal Mind merely by having

presented to it a dogmatic proposition akin to a mathematical puzzle, to be believed on pain of damnation, is simply a violation of common sense ; and yet the fact that the whole of Catholic Christendom insists upon our accepting a certain form of words and a certain definite analysis of the Universal Spirit called the Holy Trinity naturally concentrates our solemn attention upon that particular order of thought in which it has pleased God to unfold Himself to human intelligence.

It is not my desire to entangle any in metaphysical subtleties when I ask you to fix your mental gaze for a few moments on that which is called the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, before I ask you to consider the ethical considerations that flow from it.

The word " Trinity " is not in the Bible ; neither does it occur in the standard of faith required of the laity—namely, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Calvin said that he was willing that the word " Trinity " should be abolished, if only it could be the accepted faith of all that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each distinguished by a peculiar property, are one God. Nevertheless, as the word conveys an effective impression of the truth underlying it, and is sanctioned by hallowed custom, no believer need hesitate to adopt it so long as it is not used to embitter controversy or condemn others.

The essential characteristic idea underlying the word " Trinity," in which the Church expresses

the sublime doctrine of to-day, is that the Infinite Being, the Creator Spirit, is one and indivisible ; that in His unbroken Oneness there is contained a tri-unity, a threeness, not of separate individualities, but of essentially separate manifestations of the same individuality, by which absolute power, perfect love, and complete holiness enwrap the human being in an eternal purpose in every department of his life. This is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

It is not new. Traceable everywhere in the religious history of the human race is a conception of the threeness of the Supreme Intelligence, till it culminates in the revelation of the Christian faith. It underlies Zoroastrianism, it is enshrined in Brahmanism, it is discoverable in the oldest Eastern Scriptures 1,300 years before Christ, where the everlasting is described as " Sat," or Absolute Being ; " Kit," Absolute Being thinking itself into duality ; " Ananda," Absolute Being in loving operation upon the hearts of men.

Sat, Kit, Ananda : God in essence, God in manifestation, God in outflowing life. How wonderful a foregleam is this of the glorious creed which has come to us through Bethlehem and Calvary ! The God of Christianity, communion with whom we seek to-day, has revealed Himself to us as, first, the Parent-Source, from whom are all things, for " of Him and through Him and to Him are all things "; this is God the Father. Secondly, inasmuch as this truth in its entirety is

too wonderful and excellent for us finite beings to attain to, so much of this Parent-Source as can be usefully understood by man—all, that is, of His affectional and moral nature, has been revealed in a human personality so completely that Jesus can say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and yet there is so much more in God that we cannot now receive that Jesus can also say, "the Father is greater than I"; this is God in self-utterance, or God the Son. And thirdly, the perpetual influence, or Spirit, or Atmosphere, or breath of God, the essence of the character of God as revealed in Jesus, is poured forth into our inmost spirit, thinking the thought within us, praying the prayer within us, mingling God's life with our life, mind with mind, heart with heart, spirit with spirit, empowering, guiding, sanctifying; and this is God the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One.

In vain does materialistic scepticism deride the doctrine of the Trinity; in vain does it invoke mechanics and science to prove to us the absurdity of our unbelief in threeness in unity. Nature is the time-vesture of God, and threeness in unity is a recognized fact amongst the phenomena of Nature. Professor Tyndall proved to us by experiments with the spectrum that any intensely-heated body emits at the same time three rays, differing in their results, but forming such a unity as to be inseparable.

There is first the "heat-ray," which is felt but

not seen; there is secondly the "light-ray," which is seen but not felt; there is thirdly the "actinic ray," which is neither felt nor seen, but which is only known by its chemical action upon certain sensitive substances, such as in the operation of photography; and these three are one, and yet not one is the other, and not one can exist except in conjunction with the other.

Is not this an echo in Nature of the revelation of the God of Nature, the Thrice Holy of believing millions? The Father, felt, as the Soul of the Universe, but not seen. The Son, the light-ray, "I am the Light of the world," seen but not felt, not touched except by the touch of faith, "though the multitude thronged Him." The Holy Ghost, neither felt nor seen, but known by His effects in conversion, renewal, sanctification, sensitizing the heart of man to receive the likeness of God when the "Light of the world" is poured into it.*

The very analogies of the natural world forbid the thinker to allow that threeness in unity is either unphilosophical or absurd. "The meanest flower that blows" is as veritable a trinity in unity as God Himself, possessing essential life which no man hath seen at any time; visible form which manifests essential life; perfume proceeding from essential life and visible form; and these three are one. Hold in your hand a common

* *Cf.* sermon on "Holy Trinity" in "Following on to Know" (Masters and Co., 78, New Bond Street), in which this analogy is used.

magnet, and you have a model of the order of thought in which God has revealed Himself. First you have the Nature-power that holds atoms together. What is it ? Name it. You cannot ! It is just a fact that precedes demonstration, that is beyond criticism, that defies denial. Secondly, you have the tangible weight that you hold in your hand, visible, external, embodied. Thirdly, you have the outflowing magnetism which draws atoms of steel to itself. What is it ? How does it act ? It is imponderable, invisible, unanalysable, but it is the outflowing power of the two other entities, and these three are one ; and the whole is in your possession when you grasp the outward form, just as every incommunicable attribute of the Trinity is ours when we grasp vigorously Jesus the Revealer. Truly the unraveller of the secrets of Nature is the unconscious commentator upon the creeds of Catholic Christendom.

Consider now what is the ethical teaching of this transcendant doctrine of God. That God should appeal to man to unite himself in all his weakness to this magnificent Triple Alliance of power, helpfulness, and influence ; this Trinity of " love in diffusion," " love in activity," " love in indwelling," is a declaration of the dignity and responsibility of man, and an assertion of his capacity to respond to the highest, or misuse his privileges and turn away from his peace.

Man is the offspring of the Infinite : " In the

image of God made He man." Man has an hereditary similarity of nature with God ; he is himself a trinity of spirit, soul, and body, so marvellously infolded that these three are one. Spirit is the root and centre of his being. Spirit is that which underlies his face and form and speech and action ; Spirit is that by which he can look above and beyond this world of sense, and enter into communion with his God ; Spirit is the kingdom of heaven that is within us ; Spirit is the affinity which enables us to mingle our lives with God's life ; for no gift can be received without affinity to the gift.

> " Dwelt no power Divine within us,
> How could God's divineness win us ?"

The rarest beauties of sea and sky and form and colour are nothing to a man without the corresponding idea of beauty within him ; he admires and rejoices because the kingdom of beauty is within him ; the most exquisite harmonies of music are nothing to the man without the master-sense of music within him ; he is ravished by melody because the kingdom of melody is within him. Similarly the deep things of God, His nature and character, lofty ideals, boundless possibilities of development, are offered to us and attained by us because " the kingdom of heaven is within us," and the calling into activity of this " kingdom of heaven within us," this hereditary God-consciousness, is confided to our own voli-

tion ; it is the voice of the moral law within us which says, " I ought," and obedience to it is man's salvation ; it is the self-assertion within man of the Divine humanity which reaches Godward and gains strength till it assumes the control of the lower man, lifting him into a nobler existence, a loftier aspiration, a life " hid with Christ in God," and sustained by the outflowing Influence of Father and Son, which is the Holy Ghost. Surely this is the inwardness of the saying, " Whosoever will be saved must thus think of the Trinity "—to which I would add, " Whosoever will be saved must thus think of himself."

The second thought from the doctrine of the Trinity is this : In John xvii. the Lord refers to the perfect unity in essence, with plurality in manifestation, in the Godhead, as the analogy of the unity He desires amongst Christians, and He suggests that if this unity were effected, the world would believe that He came out from the Father.

To my own mind, this suggestion is proof positive that the schemes and conceptions as to the visible corporate reunion of Christendom with which we are familiar in the present day are founded on a mistaken basis, and that true unity upon the pattern of the unity of the Godhead, is not a successful scheme for theological, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical identity, but an essential, profound, spiritual unity coexistent with wide divergence of external manifestation.

" That they may be one, as we are one " are our

Lord's words ; and what was the characteristic of that plural unity ? Can any divergence in visible manifestation be imagined more complete than that which obtains in the threefold self-utterance of the Absolute named the Trinity ? First, the Infinite Immanence, the inmost uplifting life of all that is. Secondly, the visible manifestation in one human embodiment of the moral nature of the Infinite Immanence, dying as the sinless Sufferer on the cross of Calvary. Thirdly, the tongues of fire visibly descending at Pentecost and guiding the early Christian Church under the name of " the Spirit of Jesus." And these are three separate and distinct manifestations of one Immeasurable, Omnipotent Unity called God.

Then again, the Lord said, " That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." It would in no way surprise or interest the world, the outsiders, to see professors of a faith all holding precisely the same opinions and adopting precisely the same definitions and externals, living amicably together. They would have no excuse for discord. That which would arrest the attention of outsiders would be the spectacle of professors of the same fundamental belief, widely differing as to details, definitions, dogmas, and external methods, so bound together by the magnitude and reality of their common fundamental belief that they were content to suffer each other to worship precisely according to the preference of each, because they recognized beneath all externals a " unity of the

spirit" so profound, so real, so intense, that it transcended all human sects, methods, and denominations. This would be an exhibition that would interest and astonish the outsiders, and their conclusion would be that the fundamental truth which could thus weld together those widely separated by distinctions of creed, method, and sect, must be a reality. It is to this kind of unity, surely, that St. Paul referred when he bid us "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." The fact is that "the Church," in its essence, is a spiritual and invisible body, existing wholly independent of its external manifestations and methods, which may be national, geographical, almost even climatic, and with regard to which there may be, and ought to be, room for almost unlimited divergence of opinion without any rupture of true spiritual unity. If the Lord Christ were to-morrow visibly to return, after the manner in which some Christians expect Him to return, and call to Himself His Church, His Body, is there anyone in his right senses who believes that it is only the particular denomination to which he belongs that the Lord would call? Would it not be that "great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues," and sects and eras, who are united by faith in the Incarnate Lord? And if that would be true in the event expected by some, it is true to-day. This conviction incapacitates me from cordial acquiescence in the language of

the appeal for unity, widely circulated, signed by the two Archbishops and the responsible heads of the principal Christian sects in England. I am unable to accept the first proposition—namely, "that our Lord meant us to be one in visible fellowship." I believe, on the contrary, that He meant us to differ as widely as we please in visible organization and external manifestation, but to be one in spirit; and I do not believe that Christian unity is attainable by a reconsideration of frontiers or a system of mutual concessions, but by a deepening of spiritual life. The atoms of a drop of water are held in solidity by a mysterious combining agent, invisible, indefinable, called electricity. In like manner, the mysterious, ever-present, all-pervading Spirit of the Lord is the combining agent of the Church.

You could as readily induce the constituent gases to mingle and form a drop of water without electricity, as to imagine that you can make a Church unity, by obliterating rubrical landmarks and abolishing credal limitations, without a general deepening of the spiritual life. The mistake is that each man believes his own denomination to be "the Church." Doubtless the marine inhabitant of each little rock-pool at dead low water at the sea-side complacently dogmatizes that his diminutive environment is the ocean. Nothing will dispel the illusion but the rising of the tide, and as the irresistible flood advances, overflowing all barriers, the little creatures are united,

not by mutual concessions, but by a common enlargement of horizon. Once acknowledge that the unity demanded by the Christ is analogous to the unity of essence in the Trinity—namely, not unicity but harmony; once acknowledge that, like the instruments in an orchestra, apparent antagonism of sound is not inconsistent with harmonious expression of the mind of the composer, and we shall not hanker after visible unity so long only as we can secure "unity of the spirit."

I would, therefore, plead with my fellow-Churchmen to believe that rigidity is never a sign of life, bigotry never effective spiritual force. I am convinced that the indwelling Spirit of the Lord is striving in our day against exclusiveness and in the direction of the freest spiritual communion between those who differ widely as to methods, creeds, and definitions of faith; and no English Churchman does credit to himself or honour to his Church by sneering at the "Nonconformist conscience," and speaking contemptuously of "undogmatic Christianity" and "simple Bible teaching." I am quite prepared to pray earnestly "From all heresy and schism, good Lord, deliver us," and to accede to the suggestion that we should pray the prayer for unity, and "seriously lay to heart the danger we are in through our unhappy divisions," but I am more inclined to apply the intention of the prayer to the "unhappy divisions" in our own Church, to the religious

partisanship so common amongst ourselves, than to Nonconformists. And believing as I do that the Holy Catholic Church, which is the Body of Christ, transcends all human sects, systems, and denominations, I can throw my whole heart into the perfect, Divine demand of our blessed Lord recorded in John xvii. : "That they may all be one, even as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, . . . that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."

HADES

"There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all."—EPH. iv. 6.

THE picture in to-day's Gospel,* of Dives in Hades, drawn by our Lord's own hand, is that of a certain man undergoing, in another condition of being, remedial treatment in our Father's operation hospital, called Hades. And the words that cause inquiry and mental distress, and which seem to contradict the immanence of God, are the words, mistranslated from the Greek in the Authorized Version: "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." I contend—I have always contended—that the words, though of dread import, if rightly understood, are luminous with eternal hope, and fully consistent with the blessed definition in to-day's Epistle,* "God is love."

It should be laid down as an immutable axiom that all expressions in Holy Scripture calculated to terrify and distress should be interpreted according to the revealed nature of the Responsible

* Epistle and Gospel for the first Sunday after Trinity.

Father, whose name is Love, and who, according to St. Paul's all-inclusive definition, is "above all, through all, and in all." Think over that statement of the overrule and immanence of God; what a grand dogmatic declaration it is of the nature of the Creative Spirit of evolution, at once the Originator and Master of the universe!

There are considerations productive of a sense of rest and security involved in this illimitable definition of the immanence of God.

1. It predicates the boundlessness of the all-containing soul, life, love; it leaves no room for any mental conception outside the One Infinite Life.

2. It shows that the common Deistic conception of God as far away beyond the stars—outside of humanity and the universe, a conception which finds its chief sanction and support in the Latin theological ideas, blended with the Hebrew tribal Deism, is an illusion—an illusion which has its uses so long as the human mind is on the rudimentary plane of perception, but out of which the human mind will gradually grow as the intuitive plane of perception is opened to it.

3. As God is "in all," it shows that Incarnation is a universal principle, and not an isolated incident. We talk of *the* Incarnation as if our Blessed Lord alone were the Incarnate Son; whereas humanity is the Incarnation, and our Blessed Lord the Perfect Archetypal Specimen of humanity, filled with all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; therefore adorable as God, but also

the consummate and unique manifestation of a sonship, which is the attribute and glory of the race as a whole, for God is " in all."

4. It encourages us to " rest in the Lord "; in our times of darkness and difficulty to claim the indwelling Life, Love, Power ; to recognize that we have been made " subject to vanity," not of our own will, but by His will, that, after having experienced the bondage of corruption, we may fully know the liberty of the glory of sonship.

5. It implies the irrevocable law of true philosophic thought—namely, that whatever is real, not merely transitory, is eternal and universal, and must have always been, as a principle, in the measureless mind of the Infinite Originator called God ; and before this law of philosophic thought the blasphemous doctrine of everlasting torment, for so long based on this story, vanishes as darkness before light ; for that doctrine assumes the beginning of an unending condition which is a flat contradiction in terms.

A cultivated Brahmin once said to me in India, " Whatever had a beginning will have an ending ; only those things that have no beginning have no ending ; evil had a beginning, therefore evil will have an ending." Now, one inevitable corollary must follow from these axioms—namely, the ultimate salvation (in other words, the bringing to fully realized consciousness of man's true Divine nature), of every human being.

As I am requested to reiterate the exegesis I

have so frequently given of the story of Dives in torment,* I would say first, emphatically, that this picture, drawn by our Lord's hand, of a human soul undergoing remedial after-death purgation is one of the strongest possible proofs of the recognition on the part of Almighty God of His responsibility for curing, healing, every diseased soul. It is impossible to draw from it a single conclusion to justify the God-dishonouring belief which still clings to Christendom, of the remediless and unending torment of the unsaved.

Secondly, the slenderest scholarship is capable of discerning that the word "hell" is a mistranslation. Dives is not in hell (whatever that word may mean): he is in Hades; Hades is the invisible world. The word is derived from two Greek words meaning "not to see." I confess I am at a loss to discover where that word "hell," in its common acceptation, came from. The English word is from the Old Saxon *helan*, "to cover over." The man who thatches a house in Cornwall is still called a heller, and the word "helmet" is from the same root. But whence came the idea? It is not Pagan; even Prometheus, chained to the rock, said of his torments that they would have an end.

It is certainly not Jewish, for the Jews, though they brought back from their first Persian cap-

* *Cf.* "Sermons in Westminster Abbey," Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row; "Speaking Good of His Name," Masters and Co., 78, New Bond Street.

tivity a distorted view of the Zoroastrian Ahriman, and from it conceived their Satan, knew nothing of it, and it is absent both from the Mishna and the Talmud. Buddha taught, and the millions who follow his teaching believe, that hell is not a place, but a condition, the natural sequence of obedience to the lower ego, here and hereafter, while it lasts—that is, until the lower ego is transfigured. The Mussulman certainly finds Gehenna, Jahannum, in the Koran, but only for non-Mussulmans ; and, in spite of the Koran, the Persian Suffis rose to a clearer insight of what reason, right-mindedness, and conscience demand, as, for example, in Omar Khayyam, the Persian epic translated by Fitzgerald, we read :

" Can alien Pharisees Thy goodness tell ?
No—only those who with Thee dwell.
Thou sayest all sinners will I burn in hell.
Tell that to strangers—we know Thee far too well."

And again :

" I sent my soul through the invisible
Some letters of that after-world to spell ;
By-and-by my soul returned to me and said :
' I myself am heaven and am hell.' "

Moreover, where this incredible conception has obtained, history bears witness that it has proved a bar to progress, a menace to religion, a promoter of superstition, and a potent influence for the degradation of humanity. So far from its exercising a restraining influence upon the most vicious

members of society, its direct result has been to provide hardened ruffians with a suitable vocabulary for scurrilous and profane abuse, so that it is theology that has taught the world to swear. Is that Persian Suffi right? He is; but how? The answer is in the text—God is "in all." The real self, the true ego, is the Divine nature. Lately, speaking on the Immanence of God, I drew an analogy from the physical body. I pointed out that there are physical forces within us—such, for instance, as the powerful hydrochloric acid that promotes assimilation of food, which now works for our health. When the body is dead that same acid eats into the walls of the gastrum for the brief period that it is secreted. What before was life-giving becomes in other conditions destructive. That life of God, that Immanence of the Divine, that true ego, that spirit blood of our Everlasting Father, that is pulsing in us now, will, in the age of chastening, if not co-operated with here, be our chastener, our consuming fire, burning out of us what is bad, making God's people "willing in the day of His power"; and the lurid picture in to-day's Gospel is that of a human being, who in life's education resisted his regeneration, grieved and thwarted the indwelling evolving spirit, rejected persistently the moral demand ceaselessly made—not by an external lawgiver, but by an indwelling educator; so man himself—his real self, his Divine saving self, the God in him, which would have been his heaven,

is now his hell; but his purging, cleansing, restoring, hell, saving, as the Apostle says, "yet so as by fire."

Now, when our knowledge of Greek, and the best instincts of our moral nature, have obliterated the mistranslation, we are in a position to consider the place, the power, and the purpose of what our Lord calls Hades, and which He elaborated in His story of Dives and Lazarus. It is called a parable, but our Lord speaks of it as an incident. It is a biography of some one with whom He had come in contact. He says, "There was a certain rich man." It is clear that this is a powerful lesson as to the continuity of character—an assurance that death does not necessarily put an abrupt end to an hitherto uninterrupted development; that a man who dies, filled only with sensual impulses and instincts, which have controlled and overmastered his loftier aspirations, finds no change in himself when the material body in which he has been imprisoned is dropped. A man takes his character with him. Dives dies; he goes to the disciplinary department of Hades, because heaven is heavenly mindedness, and heavenly mindedness is character, and character is continuous, and continuity of character can only be remedied by the fire of eternal love remelting and remoulding it. He went, as we shall all go, "to his own place." A man can no more live a Dives here, and find himself a Lazarus hereafter, than he can go to sleep

an animal and awake a mineral. Suppose for a moment that the conventional conception of a death-bed repentance and pardon were realized in actual fact, that at the moment of death a light of knowledge burst into the soul, and with the whole heart the dying man turned to Omnipotent Love in true repentance. What then? You say: "He is forgiven." Of course he is forgiven; but in the heart of God he was never unforgiven! And forgiveness does not alter character. The point is that the whole level of his thought, and ideal, and aspiration, and action is lowered; he would be as wholly without capacity for the enjoyment of the higher spiritual state as a new-born babe is unfit for the pursuits of manhood. And into the hospital of Omnipotent Love he must go; so that, as was the case with this Dives, the opposite graces to the sin which has wrecked his life may be developed in what Browning calls that "sad sequestered state where God unmakes but that He may remake the soul He else had made in vain."

Now, in the consideration of this subject one article in the Creed is constantly overlooked—"He descended into Hell." It is worthy of the utmost emphasis that this Hades, in which this wrongly formed character in our Lord's narrative was being remelted, is the very same after-death shadow world into which the Christ descended after leaving His human body on the cross. And this Dives, whom our Lord knew, and of whom He spoke, would have been one of those

very "spirits in prison" to whom St. Peter tells us He preached. Dives is not mentioned by name; only they who died in the Deluge are mentioned by St. Peter as typical of the worst and most obstinate sinners. But it is one of the strangest problems in human psychology that theologians have been so timid in recognizing that the Hades of Dives, and the prison of the spirits into which the Christ descended, are obviously identical. I suppose it is because the inference is too ennobling, too grand, too all-embracing; the contradiction that it administers to cruel dogmas, traditional conceptions, heartless creeds, insolent sacerdotalisms, too crushing; possibly because Western Christianity has feared to cast off the shackles of Latin theology, and breathe the freer, deeper, more esoteric atmosphere of the Greek Fathers. There was no hesitation as to the acceptance in the fullest sense of all the logical conclusions of this descent into Hades in that splendid nursery of Christian theology—the Catechetical School of Alexandria. The celebrated Clement of Alexandria quotes the release of the spirits in prison in illustration of his statement that the "most royal work of God"—namely, the salvation of men—is continued not only in this world, but in the world beyond the grave." Origen, Theophilus of Antioch, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, theologians of deep thought and great logical ability, all declare that the descent into Hades was the emancipation of all,

without exception, who had died in sin, and St. Jerome actually mentions this Dives, whom our Lord had described as suffering in Hades, and declares that he was liberated at the descent of the Christ, who passed over "the great gulf fixed," which was impassable by Abraham and Lazarus. I am convinced that it is worth while to give some serious thought to this connexion between the hell of Dives and the hell into which Christ descended; for first it affords an authoritative proof of the unbroken continuity of individuality after death. It concretes the instincts and aspirations of the thinkers of the world, such as Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Æschylus. It proves that immortality is not that vague, shadowy conception of the continuance of the race, but the persistence of the individual; that no suspension, even for a moment, of the real vital functions of the ego takes place at the dissolution of the bodily frame; that spirits passing into the other dimension of space are the same; they are, in other conditions, at present inconceivable to us, but with an enduring consciousness of individuality.

The link of the common pulsation of the life of God through them and through us, is unbroken by death, whether they are in Paradise or in Hades, and the early Christians held that the spirits of the departed were in one common abode, though with separate regions or conditions for the just and the unjust, according to the requirements of their education. Wherever they

are they are the same ; we shall know them, we shall find them. " Soul to soul will strike through a finer element of her own." As for the gulf, we shall not heed it ; we shall be as calm as were Abraham and Lazarus, for we shall know that Eternal Love is working the change.

Now, I would only press home one lesson from this oft-repeated exegesis ; it is this : The test-point of character, upon which our condition hereafter would appear to depend, as illustrated by the story of Dives and Lazarus, turns not upon orthodoxy of belief, nor upon certain breaches of the moral law, but upon man's duty to his fellow-man arising from the oft-forgotten truth of the solidarity of humanity implied in the words, " God is in all." Lazarus at the gate of Dives is the analogy of the constant claim that our fellow-humans and our fellow-animals have upon our time, money, energy, compassion, and influence. Neglect of Lazarus is, in the deepest, truest sense, neglect of God in man. " There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." Thus, the divinity and the humanity are so interwoven that it is impossible for man to aid his fellow-man without at the same time definitely administering to the Eternal. To refuse to minister to others, as Dives apparently refused to minister to Lazarus, to fear to take up arms against public sources of temptation and ruin, to refuse to give liberally to recognized institutions for the betterment of others, is to

incur the condemnation—" I was in prison, and ye visited Me not ; I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat." Lazarus lies at the gate ; the dregs of our civilization lie at our doors. I will not enumerate the various forms in which the Lazarus of to-day lies at the gate of every soul whose eyes are open to the truth of the Immanence of God. Some of you will think at once of the drink-degraded Lazarus ; others will call to mind the sweated Lazarus, the long-shop-hours' Lazarus. But it seems to me that the same responsibility lies at the gate of all the white races in connexion with the atrocities in the Congo, concerning which Englishmen, descendants of the generation who emancipated the negroes, ought to be neither ignorant nor indifferent. I have recommended a certain book,* written in Mark Twain's sarcastic, cutting style, based on irrefutable evidence, and endorsed by photographs which cannot lie. Read that book in the light of St. Paul's declaration, " God is the Father of all, and in all." Is He not immanent in the coloured races, the races who make up the majority of the population of the world ? Are the dark races really inferior to the white races when they receive the same culture ? Science tells us that the five races—white, black, brown, yellow, red—differ only in the colour of their skin, but are the same in body and mind, liable to the same crimes, amenable to

* " King Leopold's Soliloquy," by Mark Twain, with sixteen illustrations. Fisher Unwin, London.

the same reasonings, capable of the same heroisms, and, as St. Paul says, indwelt by the same God. "God is the Father of all, and in all." When you have read that book you will probably ask, What can we do? I reply, I do not know. I am fully conscious of the extreme delicacy of international relationships, and the supreme caution that diplomatists must exercise to avoid the dread ultimatum of European conflict, but I think we can help to swell public opinion. We can utter our protest with sufficient conviction and intensity to strengthen the hands of our diplomatists in the negotiations which are assuredly going on between the British Government and the sovereign of the Congo Free State. We can keep the question stirring. Moreover, with our knowledge of the power of intercession we can keep it on our hearts before the God of justice and truth. And for ourselves, the consideration of Dives in Hades, and the hideous picture of the cruelties in the Congo, where it is said that every pound of rubber has cost a life, should remind us that we possess, each one of us, a carnal nature and a Divine nature, and that the friction of these opposing natures is the training-ground of our spiritual lives, and that he who knows the things that belong to his peace will cultivate his higher nature at the expense of his lower nature, believing that the potency which can build him up is nothing less than "the one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all."

TRUTH

"Buy the truth."—Prov. xxiii. 23.

THIS somewhat quaint injunction from the Book of Proverbs is the answer I always give when questions are put to me in connexion with the exposition of hell which formed the subject of the previous sermon.

I am asked: "What, after all, is truth? Where can we find truth? You say one thing about hell fire—another preacher says something different." Well, in the pursuit of truth, there are only two alternatives; the one is authority, the other is private judgment. If you adopt the first you may clip the wings of thought; if the second, you must buy the truth, and at some cost, like as a tree buys its fruit at the cost of struggle against rain, and wind, and frost, and insect, and environment. Every attainment on every plane, whether knowledge, culture, accomplishment, grace, virtue, is bought—and dearly bought—at the price of assiduity, self-control, patience, and courage. You cannot even be truthful without buying the virtue. We humans

are not truthful by nature ; we are reared in such an atmosphere of illusion and make-believe from childhood that we do not become truthful without training. A really truthful character—a character that will hold no parley with corruption, make no compromise with wrong, take no price for right, scorn to screen itself from inconvenience by complying with some conventional white lie of the social world—is bought at a high price. It is the result of the severe struggle of the higher life against the lower in all departments of moral existence. It is the fruit of the victory of the indwelling life of Him who revealed Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Consider that point first. Truthfulness, veracity in daily life, is scarcely susceptible of accurate definition from the pulpit ; the clearest exposition ever given was that of the deaf and dumb pupil in the school at Boston, who, when asked "What is truth ?" drew a perfectly straight line with his chalk on the blackboard, and when asked "What is falsehood ?" drew a crooked, zigzag line. Truth is the straight line—untruth is the crooked way.

The common instincts of honour repudiate the crooked line as a sin against social order and a breach of the unwritten law upon which all dealings between man and man are based.

No man willingly seeks relations of any kind with another man who bears the reputation of not acting squarely. It is a witness to the dignity of

humanity that no man will knowingly trust any but a true man. Truthfulness, as I understand it, does not necessarily imply precise accuracy of detail in utterance or description, but it does imply the clear intention always to convey a right impression, and the intention to convey always a right impression arises from the activity of the truth principle within. Addison says the man of integrity is "he who hears without any intention to betray, and speaks without any intention to deceive."

It is scarcely profitable to enter into the casuistical hair-splittings of the schoolmen, but as I have been definitely asked, I will say that the question as to whether the law of truth-speaking is absolute has been a subject of heated controversy between moralists of equal authority and weight. Immanuel Kant, the philosopher of Königsberg, for example, says, "The rule of truthfulness possesses the *a priori* quality of a mathematical axiom. You must speak the truth whatever the cost to yourself or others." Augustine says, "There can be no just cause for an untruth," and Tennyson, in "Queen Mary," says, "Better die than lie." On the other hand, Jeremy Taylor, says, "Who would not save his father's life from tyrants at the charge of a harmless lie?" Paley, the celebrated author of the "Evidences," says, "There are falsehoods that are not lies," and Dr. Johnson says, "If a murderer should ask you which way a man had

gone you should lie," and Athanasius, when his life was in danger, saved himself by a prevarication. Well, "Better die than lie" is doubtless a noble maxim, a grand counsel of perfection, but a different principle comes in when the lives of others are at stake, for love is higher than veracity. Love, St. Paul tells us, is higher than faith and higher than hope, and though it would revolt at the slightest stain on veracity it will give itself and all it is worth for the object that is loved. St. Paul, in the exaggeration of enthusiasm, once said he was willing to be accursed for his brethren. The converse of the proposition is self-evident. Veracity is sometimes the weapon of hate. There is no godly sincerity, no fruit of Divine sonship, in those who wield truth like a bludgeon, who speak the truth with a brutal frankness for the acknowledged purpose of causing pain. Of that detestable attitude—"Oh, I'll tell him the truth," "He shall hear the truth from me"—it is impossible to speak with too strong condemnation, for—

> "A truth told with bad intent
> Beats all the lies you can invent."

This branch of the subject may well be left to the awakened conscience. If examination indicates a tendency to untruthfulness, buy truthfulness at the cost of self-control, eradicate the tendency by a ceaseless recognition of, and appeal to, God's life in man, and be sure that the real growth of character will be found in the exact

measure of the fervour and constancy of your realization that you are a tabernacle of the Divine Word Incarnate in Jesus Christ, and as your members are the members of Christ your tongue is the tongue of Christ.

But I am convinced that the inspired injunction, "Buy the truth," is intended to lead us into deeper water than the ethics of conduct. What is the truth that we are to buy? What is the price we are to pay for it? What is truth? Lord Bacon says that Pilate was jesting when he asked that question. I doubt it. He was too intelligent for that. He grudged the price he would have to pay for it. "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend"—that was the price.

The truth—it is a phrase, an expression, a mode of indicating an indefinable and unattainable abstraction. "The truth" is the secret inward reality, the cause, the meaning, the relation of everything. "The truth" is that spiritual realization of conscious life in God towards which the human soul evolves through all eternity. As Arthur Hallam says:

> "Dark is the Soul's eye; yet how it strives and battles
> Through the impenetrable gloom to fix
> That master light, the secret truth of things
> Which is the body of the Infinite God."

"The truth" is not an attainment, but an ever-increasing illumination. It is a promise—"Ye

shall know the truth," said Jesus, and " the truth shall make you free."

Truth, as a final discovery, exists nowhere, in no department of knowledge—for truth is limitless. The ascertained truth of one generation is absorbed, transcended by the truth of the next. Facts of physiology, of mathematics, of astronomy, of science, bought at the price of patient investigation, are true so far as they go. Another generation will buy at a still higher price higher truths, which will transcend without contradicting the old truths. It is the same with truths concerning the nature and relation to creation of the Infinite Originator whom we call God, truths which are bought at the price of eager thinking into first principles, into the logical conclusions of philosophic induction, each truth carrying you heavenwards, expanding your conceptions, increasing your assurance till you almost smile to remember what once you thought of God and of yourself—

> " For the Soul in its unfolding,
> Ever more its thoughts remoulding,
> Learns more truly in its progress
> How to love and to adore."

And each stage of the truth which you have honestly purchased with the sweat of your own brow sets you free, and helps to set others free.

The Hindoo mystic describes the end to be attained as *Mukti*, liberation (setting free). In-

creased scientific knowledge sets you free from a thousand superstitions, and the physical investigators seem, by their larger mastery over the material things about us, to be on the point of liberating us from the material plane entirely; whereas deeper, nobler conceptions of the Infinite Spirit are luminous with eternal hope, and, setting you free from mediæval phantoms and lurid Calvinisms, place you upon the true standpoint of all healthful obedience, which is the recognition that your life, however apparently tempted, sorrow-stricken, derelict, is in reality "hid with Christ in God." And when you are in that attitude, mental conceptions, and dogmas that place God under limitations, simply shell off and wither.

Consider with what can we thus buy the truth? What do we possess that is precious enough wherewith to purchase this priceless emancipating boon? Browning answers the question with his usual inspired insight; he suggests without defining. He says:

> "Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
> There is an immortal centre in us all
> Where truth abides in fullness.
> All around, wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in."

An "immortal centre"—that is the gold-mine. On the physical plane it is the hereditary endowment of the rational faculty common to all except the congenital idiot. And the physical investi-

gator opens his gold-mine outwardly through his senses to the matter of the universe, and buys, at the cost of infinite toil and much denial of the claims of the "gross flesh," the truths which ease the path of life for all. The "immortal centre" on the spiritual plane also uses the rational faculty, but the spiritual investigator opens his gold-mine inwardly to the breath of the Infinite Spirit, for he believes that the "immortal centre" is not the voice of authority outside him, but the immortality of God embodied in his nature; that it is his share of the Logos—the Eternal Reason of God; that is his gold-mine waiting to be worked. And he too must "buy" truth at the cost of the "gross flesh" that hems in the "immortal centre," for this "purchasing power," this capacity for apprehending truth, is cultivated by exercise, by contemplation, by prayer, by upward thinking, by Holy Communion, by self-suppression, and is clouded and stifled by sensual indulgence and by whatever tends to materialize the life. He who would develop the power of spiritual discernment, who desires that his "immortal centre" shall hallow, guide, bless, and lead him into all truth, must with strong force of will, on all planes of life, think the thought that is highest, and earnestly strive to live the thought he thinks.

There are two planes of life on which this is difficult—the one is the social, the other the theological. Most of the hindering irritations of

life come from one or the other. The brotherhood of man is a social principle, it contemplates each man as having interdependences with his brother-man. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is half the whole law of being. But your brother-man is frequently very unlikeable; he is often unintellectual, irritating, and sometimes immoral; you are tempted to dislike him, and show pretty plainly your dislike; and that dislike of yours is a distinct hindrance to the "immortal centre"; it will cost you something to buy mentally the truth concerning your unlovable brother-man—namely, that he too is a child of God, and "God inhabited"; that the universal Mother-Soul loves him as much as you, and bears with his cantankerous peculiarities as with yours; that your consciousness of superiority is probably an indication that you have some mission to him, and perhaps, in the other dimension of space, the voice will ask you—"Where is thy brother?" and you will find that, inasmuch as thought is creative and forms an atmosphere, your thought about him has hindered him, and your dislike has made his downward way easier and swifter; your coldness discouraged him, your unconcealed contempt confused him and drew him back.

I merely say this because I know that the hard and bitter thoughts of some people create a hard and bitter atmosphere, and that many seekers after truth are hindered and blinded by the

miserable misunderstandings and irrational dislikes which disfigure so-called Christian society, and sometimes mar the happiness of Christian families.

Again, I am certain that nothing more hinders the unfolding of the " immortal centre " within, than what I can only call malicious theological partisanship on the one hand, or contempt for your brother's rudimentary religious conceptions on the other. If you are buying the truth, remember there is no single undivided standard of theological expression of the truth. The creeds of Catholic Christendom are most valuable, but there is always transcendently more in the truth than creeds can define, or verbal limitations contain. The majestic self-disclosure of the Truth, which is God, is progressive, like sunrise ; it is never final. The creeds are the sum total of the thoughts of men concerning the nature and character of God up to certain periods in Christian history, and such collections of statements are historically invaluable, especially for the multitude who will not buy the truth, but who expect that it shall be bought for them by the thoughts of others and presented to them. But remember that even the creeds have come to us from two separate and widely divergent fountains of Christian thought. We talk about " the faith once delivered to the saints," but that is not the same as the expression of the faith. The expression of the faith of Clement of Alexandria differs

from the expression of the faith of Augustine of Hippo as widely as Arminianism differs from Calvinism, or as Mr. Spurgeon differed from the Pope of Rome, and the non-recognition of this wide liberty of expression has again and again in the past shrivelled up the Godward growth of the " immortal centre " into a cruel dogmatism, degraded by a wicked intolerance. Love and mutual respect are the formative virtues of true Christian theology. " Truth," said Lord Bacon, " is the daughter of time, not of authority." There is a fundamental verity under every form of religion, however rudimentary :

" Assuredly know, when half-gods go, God appears."

But the half-gods are profitable, and cannot be hurried away.

Every true seeker makes some contribution to the general stock of the acquired knowledge of God. Even the blatant atheism of some thirty years ago made its contribution, as a protest against imperfect Deism. It broke up fallow ground, and made men consider what they really did believe.

There is a story, as old as the days of Plato, of an island in which it was reported much gold was buried. Many came and dug and delved and turned over the soil. They found no gold, but they prepared a barren soil for the seeds brought by the birds and the winds ; and the hidden treasure appeared in olive-boughs and rich clusters

of grapes. No " thought-labour " is ever lost. Truth is of the future ; others enter in and partake of the fruits ; you need not reset your theology or rewrite your creeds, but you can always review the old faiths in the new light, which never comes to destroy but always to fulfil, and adds distinction and vividness and expansiveness to the old expressions, and you can avoid as a sin against the indwelling Logos, or Reason of God, all harsh condemnation of the religious standpoint of others. In proportion to the clearness of your own vision should be your patience with what you consider the irrational doctrines and absurd limitations of another man's religious belief.

Thus, while you may believe, if you are sufficiently illuminated, the interpretation I gave of Dives in Hades, you will be silently patient with those who " believe that they believe " that he was in the torments of an unending hell.

Finally, cease not to " buy the truth " by thinking strongly, patiently, and withal humbly and teachably, into God. Not into some stereotyped idol of the mind, which is the product of the last theological work you read, or the tradition of the Church to which you belong. Thought is higher than language, but it uses language—and its language and its whisper is something like this : " Infinite Universal Spirit, Thou hast no name but Love. Thy life pulses through me and through all, and Thou art in me. Thou hast said, ' I will

never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Therefore Thou art in everything that happens to me. Thou art working in me both to will and to do that which is good. Thou art too vast for me to know Thee as my trembling spirit would. But as Thou hast revealed Thyself in Jesus I begin to understand Thee and what Thy purpose is for me and for all men. Thy will challenges me from the depths of my inmost being. I recognize it, I acknowledge it, I desire to be more at one with it. I would 'buy' Thee—more of Thee—by the conquest of my lower life with my higher, by the strong denial of my illusory self and the strong affirmation of my true self. Therefore, I pray Thee, stir the sources of my being, regenerate my nature, take me, make me, if needful break me." This is, I suppose, to possess such measure of the truth as is purchaseable here, for it is to know that the life is "hid with Christ in God" and to say :

> "I am Thine, O Lord ; I have heard Thy voice,
> And it told Thy love to me ;
> But I long to rise on the wings of faith
> And be closer drawn to Thee."

SHALLOWNESS

"Launch out into the deep."—LUKE v. 4.
"Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord."—1 PET. iii. 15 (R.V.).

THESE two injunctions, the one from the Gospel, the other from the Epistle for the fifth Sunday after Trinity, spiritually discerned, amplify and illuminate the subject upon which I last spoke, and in connexion with which I have received queries and comments. We considered the two questions, What is truth? and Where is truth? In answer to the first question, I suggested that truth is not an attainment, but an ever-increasing illumination. It does not exist as a *final* discovery anywhere in any sphere. The truth is that ever-increasing spiritual realization of conscious life in God towards which the human soul evolves through all eternity. Therefore, the truth has little if anything to do with those doctrinal differences over which men fight their virulent theological battles. Truth resides not in accuracy of theological belief, but in deep and noble thoughts of God, accompanied by an

earnest effort to live the thought you think. The purity of heart which alone sees God is not an external rectitude of conduct, though whatever sensualizes the life darkens truth, but it consists in a mental attitude of love, peace, unselfishness, and integrity of purpose. It is significant that the condemnation implied in our Lord's sternest denunciation was pronounced not upon the publican, the harlot, the sinner, but upon dogma without love, upon orthodoxy without charity. Therefore truth has, as I said, to be "bought" at the price of eager, earnest thinking into first principles, into the logical conclusions of philosophic induction, and every fresh light carries you heavenwards, increasing your assurance, expanding your conceptions, brightening your life.

When we considered the answer to the question, Where is truth? I suggested that it was not discoverable in the voice of authority outside of us, though that has its great value on the rudimentary plane, but in the whisper of the Immanent Divine embodied in our nature, in our individual share of the Logos, or distributed life of the Absolute. Browning says:

> "Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe;
> There is an immortal centre in us all
> Where truth abides in fullness."

Browning did but echo Cicero, who wrote "Truth is sunk in the deep," and Cicero did but

echo Confucius, who said "Truth dwelleth deep underground." The concurrent testimony of the thinkers of all ages gave birth to the adage that "truth is at the bottom of a well." It is; but that well is the fathomless depth of our own true being, which the Lord Jesus told us should be within us as a well of water springing up into eternal life.

These two propositions are strikingly illustrated by the two passages of Scripture, which I have quoted from to-day's altar Scriptures, spiritually discerned.

I say "spiritually" discerned; there are several planes of discernment. It was Swedenborg who taught us to interpret Scripture on three separate planes: the literal plane, which is the plane of perception; the intellectual plane, which is the plane of analogy; and the spiritual plane, which is the plane of the intuitions. If we were complete experts in these laws of interpretation doubtless the Bible would become to us a new and far more precious inspired literature.

In considering the incomparable word-picture in this morning's Gospel we can ignore the plane of perception. We are not likely to interpret the command, "Launch out into the deep," as referring in our case to a literal boat—a literal shore—a literal net. But when we consider it on the intellectual plane—the plane of analogy, it is luminous with warning, and we see at once that the great Teacher is here putting his finger

upon a moral failing which incapacitates nations, churches, individuals, and that moral failing is shallowness, superficiality. I do not desire to elaborate this thought; but no careful observer will deny that this plague of shallowness is the bane of public life in an age when the increase of what is called education has universalized a thin veneer of shallow information upon every subject under the sun—information acquired from a hasty perusal of the selected morning newspaper—so that every one has an opinion on all subjects, and few men have a conviction on any. It is sometimes justifiable to wonder how many loud-tongued public advocates have honestly, as before God, made a conscientious study for themselves of measures and schemes calculated to produce rectitude, peace, order, and national prosperity? how many have thought into those profound principles whereby public morality is raised and public wrongs are righted? how many have made a careful study of those fundamental axioms which underlie the steady upward growth of a nation's moral standard? When the self-appointed leaders of others sweep the shallows with their nets they may toil all the long night of life, and though they embitter the world with their controversies, they take nothing because opportunism and not principle, popularity and not conscience, the watchwords of traditional policy and not conviction, represent their highest enthusiasm.

On this plane—this plane of analogy—the voice

by the Sea of Galilee, commands "Launch out into the deep"—the deep where principles shape actions. Cease that impotent skimming of the mere surface of life, that dabbling in the shallow water of fleeting opinions, that parrot-like repetition of other men's aphorisms; let down your nets of thought and inquiry into those depths where first principles, elemental laws, changeless distinctions between true and false lie hid.

Great national reforms lie in the deep waters; they are never effected by shallow time-servers, whose policy is not rooted in the profound principles which alone can purify the commonwealth.

From time to time there come forth men to whom the spirit of Him who stood by the Galilæan lake has whispered, "Leave the shallows," "Drop the party watchwords," "Launch out into the deep." And in America a Lloyd Garrison, after being whipped through the streets of Boston, makes his country ring again, while he demands that every man who holds a slave shall show his bill of sale from God Almighty, or be condemned as a man-stealer. In England our own abolitionists eschewed all political party, refused all office, dignity, or emolument; they left the shallows, launched out into the deep, and so broadened the moral foundation of the national life.

It was this voice that sounded by the Sea of Galilee that inspired Lord Shaftesbury to fight

the battle of the oppressed—the little slaves of the chimneys and the mines. No political party in the country could claim him as its own. It is only thus that great reforms are effected.

On the same plane—the intellectual plane—who can doubt that this moral failing has infected to a certain extent the national Church of which we are members, this tendency to shallowness, superficiality, exaggeration of the importance of perfectly immaterial minutiæ. Instead of casting the solid weight of the immense influence of the Church against organized monopolies, vice-producing trades, unfair wages, life-destroying labour, and general irreligion, Church dignitaries and Church courts have been preoccupied with such trivialities as to whether candles on the altar should be lit or unlit, whether the wine for the Eucharist should be diluted with water in the vestry or the church, and deep cleavages and bitter hostilities have arisen upon questions which matter not the weight of a thistledown. "Launch out into the deep," says the voice from the Sea of Galilee; solemnly, seriously, purposefully claim the God capacity within the Church, and in the midst of a world lying in wickedness, a daily press teeming with the records of terrible offences against God and humanity, the demon of intemperance pauperizing and degrading the race, take your place as heaven's antidote to a world's depravity, instead of letting society step back into Paganism while you are picking

theological and ceremonial motes out of each other's eyes; the thoughtful letter in which the Archbishop has recommended to the consideration of Convocation the finding of the commission which has been sitting for two years upon the so-called irregularities in the Church endorses the Eternal verity underlying the command—"Launch out into the deep." He suggests—I am not quoting his words—that rubrics, directions, articles of subscription, credal definitions, adapted to the standard of past ages, are manifestly out of harmony with modern thought. What will be the ultimate outcome of the finding of this commission I know not, but I am certain that the command, "Launch out into the deep," is the Divine protest against the error of establishing finalities as to knowledge of God and methods of worship, when liberty of thought, freedom of action, and general progress is the universal law of all that is.

"We must not," says Bishop Lightfoot, "cling obstinately to the decayed anachronisms of the past, we must not narrow our intellectual horizon, but must absorb new truths, gather new ideas, adapt, enlarge, and follow the teaching of the Spirit."

It remains to consider the injunction, "Launch out into the deep," on the spiritual plane—the plane of the intuitions. The Lord Jesus—the Perfect Specimen of the universally diffused Divine humanity—the visible embodiment of the

heart of the Absolute, with the whole world in His thoughts, with you and me in His thoughts, says, "Launch out into the deep." It is a soul-lifting injunction. Let down your net of thought-concentration into the fathomless depths of the Infinite Originator; think deeply into the Soul of Souls; and though you will discover, more and more as you progress, that beyond your deepest conception the unexplored still remains, you will find an exquisite rest to your soul. You will have thought yourself clean past the hurly-burly of environment into the very bosom of the Mother-Soul—and that is peace. And in what direction shall I thus think? As the Divine love-spirit pulses through all that is, you can think in every direction—you can commune with God everywhere. But St. Paul tells you in what direction each one should think; he says: "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord." What does he mean? He means that this profound thought of God as Absolute Substance, universally diffused and universally self-conscious, necessitates the conviction that humanity is the out-birth of God. He implies that, as God expresses Himself in all visible things, the highest expression of God's thought on this planet is Man, and therefore that there is in the very centre of our humanity a germ of God's eternal love and God's eternal life. And as man continues to "launch out into the deep" of himself, he receives internal evidence that the mystic "somewhat" within

him is nothing less than the Logos, the Word, the self-evolving Divine nature; that he is himself part of that Mystery of the "Word made Flesh"; that this Mystery has been revealed to him, in perfection, in one objective manifestation called Jesus Christ, and therefore that the name of the potentiality in him is Christ—as St. Paul calls it, "Christ in him the hope of glory"; and he who accepts this truth sees that it contains and implies the promise of his bright, high, endless future; and he also recognizes that this germ of immortal sonship demands watchful, prayerful culture, and he acknowledges the appropriateness of St. Peter's injunction in this morning's Epistle, "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord"; for he recognizes that this immanent radiance of God has necessarily and logically its aspect of terror; that it is a force to be reckoned with; that in pure mercy, if it is not by man's co-operation suffered to absorb and at-one, it will destroy all that is base and low, and carnal and self-sufficient and stubborn—all, in short, that unsanctifies.

And he who has thus launched out into the deep of his own nature, and found there the Christ, if he would not postpone his perfection and multiply his discipline, will search and see that he is not hindering and hampering the Royal germ—the Divine sonship, which is unfolding within him. Do you ask me: "How can we sanctify in our hearts Christ as Lord?—are there

any recognized rules of conduct ?" I reply : I am only a humble pupil in God's school, but I would say begin with the affirmation of the axiom that the Unfolding of the Christ principle, which is Infolded in the nature of man, is the predestined purpose of Almighty God for each one of us. Teach thyself to believe that thy dearest friend dwells deep within thine own soul ; then, when by mental effort you have located the God-consciousness as being within yourself as well as everywhere outside you, do not strive for heroic issues, but in patient, quiet obedience to duty—home duty and public duty—assure yourself that nothing is trivial, nothing is small. Emerson says :

> " There is no great and no small
> To the Soul that maketh all."

Then, never allow yourself to be discouraged at the poverty of the God-likeness you recognize in yourself. Evolution is a very slow principle : hold a seed in your hand ; there is little likeness to the parent plant or tree in shape, size, appearance ; but you know that in the soul of that seed is contained potentially the the perfect image and likeness of the parent plant.

When troubled by evil in the world around you be careful not to ascribe reality to a shadow. When Jesus said, " Resist not evil," He did not mean His words to be taken on the surface-plane

of perception, and that we were to condone wrong-doing by silent, unresisting acquiescence; but I imagine He did mean: do not give evil a reality it does not possess by mentally magnifying its existence and power; your world will be very much what you mentally make it; overcome evil by the ceaseless recognition and constant affirmation of the reality and omnipresence of good; recognize that one life, one love, one purpose—and that an irresistible purpose—pulses through all that is.

When troubled by evil in yourself, say "I am a thought of God, a word of God—the Word of God abideth for ever." The Word—the Logos—the Christ—is the reality in you; it will absorb, assimilate, purify, illuminate, at-one the whole being. The saying "The caterpillar dies that the butterfly may live" is not accurate. The caterpillar does not die; if it did there would be no butterfly; the butterfly form is always in the caterpillar, and the caterpillar form is transformed, transfigured at-one-d by the butterfly form evolving within it as its "hope of glory."

And one thing more. To live this life which is the "life hid with Christ in God," does not imply physical, actual, isolation from the world. What is needed is mental separation, not physical separation. You can continue to progress in the development of your highest spiritual faculties while there is nothing noticeable in your mode of life to distinguish you from others.

So to "sanctify in your heart Christ as Lord"

is not to fight over definitions of His nature, or to talk controversially about Him with your lips, but to let His spirit work in you and rule you, slowly at-one-ing within you the human and the Divine, and lifting you out of the illusions and infirmities of your finite nature ; it is to acknowledge and co-operate with this mystic hidden Divine vitality, which is predestined to confer upon us—" in this world knowledge of God's truth, and in the world to come life everlasting."

THE COLLECT OF ASSURANCE

"O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth."

I PROPOSE to depart from convention, and, instead of selecting a text, encourage a thought-excursion into the general teaching of the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for the eighth Sunday after Trinity, based upon the language of the incomparable collect which I have just used.

It is sometimes a profitable mental exercise to emphasize certain familiar words, and repeat them with special intention, endeavouring to estimate honestly how far they have become incorporated into the verities of our life. Oliver Wendell Holmes once described the process to me as "Mental depolarization of familiar passages of Scripture." The Church of which we are members puts into our mouths to-day these words: "O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth *all* things both in heaven and earth." The question is, do we believe that? Is that an axiom on which our lives are based? Do we repeat these words with conviction, or do we use

them either with indifference, or in a non-natural sense, obliterating their meaning with a crowd of mental reservations ?

"O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth *all* things both in heaven and on earth."

Thousands of voices throughout the length and breadth of the Christian Church have reiterated that statement to-day, and, I venture to say, without really believing it. The Latin schoolmen, such as Augustine and Anselm, who have built up our theological systems, did not believe it ; the Church as a whole does not believe it ; the inveterate instinct of the ecclesiastical mind balances it with reservations, or fences it in with conditions and limitations until it is lost in a haze and has no direct meaning. The wonder is how it ever found a place in the Liturgy ; it comes from the Sacramentary of Gelasius, and was composed by one of the Gregorys, and I imagine that it was the automatic outcome of the composer's subliminal consciousness, that which Browning calls the "immortal centre in us all where truth abides in fullness," and from whence, under inspiration, truth sometimes speaks out independently of the outer consciousness of the speaker.

Why is it that this clear and definite statement of the ceaseless operation of the Universal Being in His creation is thus disbelieved ? Is it because, in the words of that vile epigram, it " is too good to be true " ? When we speak of God, the epigram should be " too good *not* to be true,"

Why is it disbelieved? Simply because it grinds to powder a whole category of adopted shibboleths which have aimed at reducing to a precise and working form the relation of humanity to the One, all-containing Soul, Life, Love, which has expressed itself in humanity.

What, for example, becomes of the dogma of original sin if men are the spirit children of God, heirs of His eternity, and if He "ordereth all things both in heaven and on earth"? Augustine practically invented the doctrine of original sin, and (as Mr. Tennant has shown in his able work on the so-called fall of man) without one shadow of authority. Inherited tendency to unregulated desires is a recognized experience; inherited guiltiness is a grotesque travesty of elementary justice.

What, again, becomes of the favourite doctrine of human free will, in the sense of self-determinism, if God "ordereth *all* things both in heaven and on earth," and if God is Love, and the Will of God is man's sanctification?

The full absurdity of the paradox that man's will can ultimately and permanently defeat the predestined purpose of God, which is the salvation of the race, requires only to be faced to be repudiated. Postulate an Omnipotent, Responsible, Creative Parent-Spirit, expressing Himself in a human race, that He might have millions to love, and millions, after education, to love Him, and by some miscalculation so overdoing His work as to produce a being with a superior will to

Himself, capable of resisting Him through the endless ages, and putting His benign purpose to complete and ridiculous confusion, and you will have arrived at a *reductio ad absurdum*. The will of man, though it has its clearly defined sphere of activity, can no more escape the benevolent action of the will of God than a material substance on this planet can escape the law of gravitation, though, within that law, it may have abundant freedom of action. Obviously we have a large measure of volition within the irresistible current of the will of God, or we could not become moral beings. The antagonistic energies of that divinely provided resisting agency that we call moral evil, keep us constantly on the alert, and, as we make, within our limited sphere, correct choice between the alternatives presented, we are built up Godward or the reverse. But inasmuch as God and man are elementally inseverable, and God "ordereth all things," though wrong choice and the selection of lower standards will occasion pain and unrest, and seriously delay the evolution of the Eternal purpose, and even possibly entail disorder and discipline here and hereafter, God is omnipotent; to defeat Him is impossible.

Look down upon some great river from a commanding height; look down, say, upon the silver Rhine from the chain of hills which encircle the Grand Duchy of Baden. That river is inexorably predestined to join the ocean; to prevent it you

would have to violate the law that keeps the earth a sphere. But note the tortuousness of its course ; see how it makes vast loops and bends, sometimes doubling back upon itself as some obstacle—some exceptional hardness of soil—opposes its progress. The purpose of its existence appears temporarily frustrated ; important consequences, even the demarcation of territories, may result from its apparent liberty to follow its own sweet will, but no power on earth can prevent it from ultimately fulfilling its destiny under the majestic law of gravitation which predestines it to unite with the ocean.

To those who believe the words of the collect of to-day, it is equally certain that no power can stay the current of the water of life, the stream of the evolution of the Divine nature, which is part of the equipment of man, from ultimately reaching—it may be " far off, at last, far off "—the ocean of uncreated life whence it came, and whither from all eternity it is predestined to return ; for the Will of God is man's sanctification.

Again, the hideous libel against the Fatherhood of God implied by the doctrine of endless, remediless, useless, unending torment in the world to come is obliterated by to-day's collect. I enumerated recently the arguments for its refutation, which I will not now repeat, but if it be true that God " ordereth *all* things," and if amongst the " all things " that He ordereth there really were endless hell fire, truly noble-minded men

would rather go there than pass an eternity with a being whose moral standard is so far below the highest human standard that it could include such an " ordering " as that. When, in the year 730, the English missionary Willibrod was about to baptize the Pagan Duke of Friesland, the Duke asked the missionary where were the souls of his heathen ancestors. " In hell," was the reply. He at once drew back from the baptismal waters with the remark, " If that is so, I would rather remain with my own people." And there spoke a noble, righteous soul. The same noble spirit is discoverable in the history recorded in the Upanishads many years before the Christian era, of Yhodistera, the stainless king, who was translated to heaven without death. On his arrival in heaven, he was observed to be restless, and one of the Devas asked him, " Yhodistera, what seekest thou ?" He replied, " I seek my well-beloved, and I see them not." " Yhodistera," replied the Deva, " your well-beloved are in hell "—upon which Yhodistera is reported to have turned his back on heaven, saying, " I go to hell to seek my well-beloved, if perchance some pain of mine may gain them ease." Thus do the deepest, truest instincts of human nature rebuke man-made caricatures of the Father-Soul of the universe.

I repeat : What becomes of all these shibboleths, these rudimentary conceptions, if we believe—*really believe*—that God, the Omnipotent Creative

Love-Force, the universally diffused Individuality, the Absolute Substance out of whom all that is emerges, "ordereth *all* things both in heaven and on earth," and that His name is Love?

Do you say that this complete acceptance of the words of the Collect lands us in fatalism? I deny it; it is not fatalism, it is filialism. The attitude of a child, not troubling itself about grave matters of family arrangement, is not fatalism, but simple filial trust. Read to-day's Epistle, and you will see that this "ordering all things" is not fatalism, it is not the blind out-working of an impersonal irrational force, but the Divine overrule of a responsible Fatherly Providence. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Here the definition of God is enlarged: "God is Spirit." The definition of man is suggested: Man is Spirit, because Man is God's Son. It is necessary to reiterate that an entire scheme of erroneous theology has emerged from the unfortunate selection of the word "Adoption" as a translation of the Greek word *υἱοθεσία*. This compound word (never used except in the Greek Testament) signifies the placing of one who was unconsciously a son into the knowledge of the fullness of his privileges, and it cannot be tortured into the meaning of our English word "adoption," which implies the receiving into a family of one

who was not a son before, and training and educating him as though he were a son. Man is God's son, not because God has adopted him, but because man, in his inmost, is spirit. Pursue him through the chemical combinations of his bodily organism, track him through his automatic and influential systems, and there is ever a residuum, a somewhat which eludes the investigator, which the knife of no anatomist can detect, which the exhaustive analysis of no psychologist can define, which refuses to be ignored, which knows with a certitude beyond all logic that it is, which simply smiles when it is told by materialists that it is the ripest product of chance or the result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms set in motion no one knows how, which cognizes the universe and calls itself "I," which finds itself thinking, feeling, resolving, perceiving in spite of lifelong atomic flux. And what is this residuum but Divine Spirit differentiated into separate human entities? What is this but the transmutation of God's thought into Beings who think?

God and man must then come together because of the affinity between them, because the distinctive element of humanity is an emanation from the fullness of Divine life. Spirit is not a word that lends itself readily to definition, but it is the outbreathing of the inmost in God and the inworking of the inmost in man; it is that part of man which is capable of living intercourse with God, and he is the most Godlike in whom it is

most developed; and where it is manifested in perfection, there is divinity.

For this reason the divinity of the Lord Jesus is not a theological dogma, but a logical necessity; for in Him the Divine Logos was embodied in such measure that He was the absolutely perfect manifestation of the Divine Sonship, which is the glory and attribute of humanity as a whole.

The late Sir Syed Ahmed, the distinguished head of the great educational establishment at Aligarh, in India, spoke of Jesus as Ruach Allah, the out-breath of God, the embodiment of the Spirit of God. And that which Sir Syed Ahmed, though a Mussulman, had the illumination to perceive was positively true of Him in whom was manifested "the fullness of the Godhead," is relatively true of all men in their inmost nature. Men are the differentiations of the breath of God, and the spirit of man abides in the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God in the spirit of man, as the bird abides in the air and the air in the bird; and *υἱοθεσία*, mistranslated "adoption," is the awakening of the inmost nature of man in response to the perpetual pleading and impact of the Universal Spirit.

At this point another question suggests itself. If God be Love, the one only Substance in the universe, resistless, resourceful, perfect, and if He "ordereth all things both in heaven and on earth," why, why, this *via crucis?* why this discord of sundered wills? why this distress, soul-darkness,

misunderstanding? Apart from the fact that the legitimate method of reasoning by inference silences the question, because an all-good, all-creating Spirit could never be taken by surprise, never make a mistake, and never have to mend a broken plan, the Gospel for to-day reveals the method of our education, and teaches us under an allegory that the true life of Divine Sonship can only emerge from deep contrasts; that in a sinless, painless world the moral element would be lacking; that in such a world goodness, for want of a contrast, would have no significance in the conscious life of man.

What is the spiritual meaning of that metaphor in to-day's Epistle from the vegetable world about gathering "grapes from thorns and figs from thistles"? Obviously, the thorn and the thistle, the grape and the fig, cannot signify separate types of men, or the whole force of the metaphor would fail, and rank Calvinism would be established. The thorn and the thistle are obeying God's own law of heredity and affinity by producing only thorns and thistles. They would violate the law of their being if they produced grapes and figs. No, it is just the old unvarying experience of the nature and constitution of man which perplexed and grieved St. Paul. It is an allegory of our separate selves, of that strange complex nature of which we are so conscious, and which differentiates us from the lower animal. Each man is the soil in which the hereditary flesh-

seed produces thorn and thistle, and the hereditary spirit-seed produces grape and fig. The two growths in the same individual strive for the mastery, and from the deep contrast between them emerges the perfected life of the child of God. There is no other way, for thus hath the Father appointed; salvation is character, not a scheme successfully to elude well-merited chastisement. There is no royal road to character; "to him that overcometh" is the promise; the volition of the individual, stimulated by the breath of the Spirit of the Father, bearing witness to Sonship, decides between the thorn nature and the vine nature almost every hour of the day.

Heaven is our goal; and heaven is heavenly-mindedness, and heavenly-mindedness is character, and character is the result of moral decisions, and moral decisions are made by the will, and the will is the executive of the conscience, and the conscience is the voice of the higher nature—the "Kingdom of Heaven within us."

As God's sons, we have the capacity, and we are given the responsibility, of living by a definite effort and purpose the higher life, the fruit-bearing life; and, as we live it, we weaken and starve the thorn-bearing life. "We are debtors," says the Apostle, we, who know the secret of Abba, Father, we are debtors, not to the thorn and thistle to live after the thorn and thistle, for if we live after the thorn and thistle, we must die;

but if we, through the spirit—that is, through the development of the higher fruit-bearing nature—do mortify the deeds of the thorn and the thistle, we shall live.

Surely this is the teaching of to-day's Collect, Epistle, and Gospel. Every purposeful encouragement of Godward aspiration, every clinging to principle in time of temptation, every masterful conquest over sensual passion by ejaculatory prayer, every self-suppressing quenching of anger by the kind and gentle word, every courageous witness against public wrong when self-interest would have kept us silent, ministers to the growth of the Divine fruit-bearing nature, and withers the thorn ; and, on the contrary, every conscious stifling of a good desire, every deliberate yielding to animalism, every refusal to recognize responsibility for the temptation of the weaker brother, every wilful violation of the everlasting distinction between right and wrong, blights and mildews the fruit-bearing nature, till the thorn and the thistle spring up and, for the time, choke it.

Thank God, the Collect assures us that the resources of His tireless love for every " plant that the Heavenly Father hath planted " are not exhausted if the thorn and the thistle do thus choke the life, for there is the promise (which is a doom and a promise in one) that the thorn and the thistle shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. But this is the disciplinary remedial treat-

ment of the world to come, and it will be a part of ourselves that will be thus burnt. And this fire of remedial destruction, though it is the fire of the love of God, is painted in the parable of Dives and Lazarus as of awfulness unspeakable. But we "have not received the spirit of bondage unto fear," but the Spirit of Sonship whereby we cry "Abba, Father." So let our resolution be to *believe* the Collect for to-day. Let us believe it intensely, practically, restfully. "God whose never-failing providence ordereth *all* things both in heaven and on earth." Then failing health, darkening prospects, the multitudinous sorrows of life, the puzzles of human education, will all be illuminated for us with the unshakable conviction that we are in God's infant school for the formation of character, and that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed"; for, as one has said:

"I think that human lives
Must bear God's chisel keen,
If the spirit yearns and strives
For the better life unseen.
For men are only blocks at best,
Till the chisel of God brings out the rest."

DEMONOLOGY

"That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by the Lord's servant [margin, by the devil] unto the will of God."—2 Tim. ii. 26 (R.V.).

OBVIOUSLY it is not easy at once to break the fetters of mental limitations, and rest in the glorious doctrine of the Immanence of God upon which I have recently been speaking. Truly to rest in the measureless Love of the Infinite, Creative Mind is to be convinced that one Life, one Love, one Intelligence is expressing itself in all that is. It is to realize, with Jacob Boehme, that God is All, and All is God. Not in the Pantheistic sense, which identifies God with the universe and so loses Him, but in the sense that God is the universally diffused individuality, conscious in all that is, and yet thinkably antecedent to and therefore independent of phenomena. It is to believe in God as not only immanent, but also transcendent; thus it is to believe in an Infinite Originator who can never be taken by surprise, never make a mistake, and never have to mend a broken plan. And from

this there follows one logical corollary—namely this: either the problem of sin, evil, temptation, and the rest, is, or it is not, part of the universal order.

If it is part of the universal order, then all things, however apparently paradoxical, are working together for good. If it is not part of the universal order then we are confronted with another eternal antagonistic intelligence in the universe in open hostility to the benevolent purpose, and this is a dualism fatal to any intelligent belief in God. Which is it? Are we universalists, working out by human volition a predestined purpose, or are we dualists under two Kings—one good and one bad?

This is the problem which faces us all, and which some of you have placed before me.

I ask you to look at this recorded utterance of St. Paul in his letter to his young Bishop Timothy.

"Taken captive by the devil unto the will of God." The Revised Version of the New Testament is far from perfect, but for this courageous and faithful rendering of the original Greek we owe the revisers a sincere debt of gratitude. It contains a new and striking conception, presenting a moral paradox calculated to startle stiff and old-fashioned religionists. I can imagine that this translation was not ultimately passed by the revisers without considerable discussion.

But there it stands, full of authority, as a mental corrective to the words of St. Peter in this morning's Epistle, the Epistle for the Third

Sunday after Trinity, which if they were to be apprehended literally without correction on the higher plane—the plane of the intuitions—would be sufficient to dishearten the most optimistic, and make this world of education indeed a fearful place in which to live. If it were literally true that "our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, was going about seeking whom he might devour"—in other words, that an invisible, all-powerful antigod, of infinitely greater intelligence and greater intensity of purpose than any human being, was ceaselessly labouring to destroy the moral order of the universe—it is but little that any of us sons of men could contribute to the issue of such a conflict.

The whole scheme of artificial and false demonology, which originated from the tendency of the human mind to objectify and almost deify evil, and which has peopled the imagination of Christendom with devils, is utterly swept away by this one inspired sentence: "Led captive by the devil *unto the will of God.*" For what is the will of God? The will of God is man's sanctification. In other words, the will of God is the procedure and operation of the infinite law of God's being, and the law of His being is the slow training and evolution of a human race in which He has expressed Himself, enshrined Himself, which "lives, moves, and has its being in Him," and which His irresistible, omnipotent will declares shall be sanctified.

Therefore the soul of man can no more ultimately elude or escape the " shall " of God than the planet can escape the law of gravitation. And the irrefragable logical corollary of this " shall " of God is an absolute universalism, and the strenuous denial of the essentiality of evil, which, if essential, must be the antithesis of God and so the promoter of atheism. " Led captive by the devil unto the will of God " is, then, a suggestive orientalized paraphrase for the chastening and remedial aspect of the Divine activity. God is love, and love is not only the driving power behind evolution, but also the provider of the resisting agency which stimulates and guides evolution into right channels. It is a recognized law of biology that resistance is a condition of evolution. Without resistance upon the physical plane there can be no healthy vegetable or animal growth. Without resistance upon the moral plane there can be no moral life. Moral life is not tranquil conformity to environment, but energetic struggle against any environment that contradicts moral growth, and by contradicting it makes it what it is. Where human volition is not exercised in healthily meeting the resistance of temptation, when what St. Paul calls " the other law in our members warring against the law of our minds " brings us into captivity to the law of sin that is in our members, then in the strong embrace and grip of another power, the self-made devil of our animal nature that has over-

mastered us and holds us down, we experience, sooner or later, a conscious humiliation and shame, the bitterness of which leads us to recover ourselves out of the snare of this self-devil by which we have been taken captive unto the will of God. So that the will of God, which is our sanctification is a power not to be trifled with.

It is a sublime, a transcendent conception, that the whole mystery of human education, with all its paradox and confusion, on its dark side as well as its bright side, is completely under the Divine overrule, and that God's perfected humanity will ultimately emerge even out of the lawlessness of self-will, that even the "*snare of the devil*" in which men are led captive is "*unto the will of God.*"

Now, this is the thought upon which I suggest that minds should be concentrated. To myself it is most illuminating, whilst full of warning. For (1) it solves the problem of the mystery of that which we call evil; (2) it provides a sure basis for tranquil self-abandonment to the purpose of the Omnipotent; (3) it indicates the sphere of man's co-operation with that purpose.

1. It solves the problem of evil, so far, that is to say, as the problem can be solved. How does it do this? By its complete abolition of dualism, by its bold reference of the painful, contradicting, disciplinary side of life to the loving activity of the One All-containing Soul, in whose infinite mind whatever now exists, however

puzzling, must have pre-existed as an elemental thought.

"Led captive by the devil unto the will of God." Do we know what we mean when we say God? "Can a man by searching find out the Almighty?" asks Job. Yes, he can, under that promise of the Lord that His Spirit down the ages should gradually, progressively teach men what in His day they were not ready to receive. We, in our day, are the inheritors of all the earnest, upward thinking of past ages, plus the direct revelation of the Christ that the nature of God is spirit, the name of God is love, the relation of God to humanity is paternal. The fullness of time has come for a reverent but fearless reconsideration of our conception of God, and of our relationship to Him. A right understanding of the Christian conception of God brings Him very, very near, so that it is only His nearness that hides Him, for it does not banish Him to a throne beyond the stars, or sublimate Him away into the idealized abstraction of Pantheism, but presents Him as an object of love, reverence, adoration, and trust. The limited Deistic conception of the external Creator who has made worlds out of nothing by the fiat of His will, and who does not now innovate upon the resistless play of the forces He has set in motion is gone. Paley's argument for design is out of date. Immanence and evolution are higher than design. The Pantheistic conception which identified God

with the universe and affirmed that God could have no existence apart from the universe which manifests Him is not gone, but has received form and outline and life and reality, and is purged from its dreary impersonal aspect by the coming of the personal and perfect manifestation in the Incarnation.

It is now Pantheism plus transcendence—God immanent and transcendent. The accommodations which were applicable to the mind of man in a rudimentary stage have passed away.

To us God is not "a person" in the sense in which we use the word. God is the all-diffused individuality, self-conscious in all that is, self-conscious in the minutest electron that defies the most powerful microscope, expressing Himself in all forces and in all things from the gold-dust on the wing of a butterfly to the immeasurable perfection of the mind of the Christ. We ought to be able to address our Father-God, both as individual and as universal. We ought to be able to say to Him: "Infinite, universal Spirit, we recognize Thee everywhere, the pulsation of Thy life through all things causes all to live and move and have their being, and Thou art our Father."

And if at any time we are bewildered by the boundlessness of this conception, and the mental demand for personality in the Absolute becomes imperious and irresistible, has He not given us Jesus, the supreme manifestation for purposes of mental conception of so much of the nature of

the Universal Soul as man can appreciate ? When I cry to Him, "Lord Jesus, show us the Father," He will reply, "Have I been two thousand years given to you, and hast thou not known Me ? I am the sacrament of the Absolute, the outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual omnipresence which you say you cannot find. I am the personality of the Universal Soul; whoso receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me." And at once the human spirit, temporarily bewildered in its pursuit of the all-filling individuality, can rest itself upon the beating heart of one like ourselves, and yet one in whom was all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. "Come unto Me, saith One, and, coming, be at rest."

This is the God unto whose will we are sometimes led captive by the power of evil. Do you not see how this elevates, illuminates, mitigates the whole mystery of that black puzzle in the world ? This God says, "I am the Lord, there is none else. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil, I the Lord do all these things." And if, with that inquiring mind which is the Godward appetite of the human soul, you ask why, the answer is twofold. First, common sense assures you that there cannot be good without an opposite whereby to recognize it; that in a protected, shielded, temptationless school of education the moral element would be absent; that, for want of contrast, goodness in such a school would have no significance in the

conscious life of man. And, secondly, the method of reasoning by inference silences the question. Acknowledge that one life, one soul, one intelligence, one love pulses through all that is ; that the purpose of this all-good, all-creating spirit is glorious and resplendent beyond human thought, and that He is omnipotent and omniscient, the fact that He has chosen this method of carrying out His purpose is the absolute guarantee and assurance that it is the best method. I know that at this point we arrive at an inevitable question. If this devil by whom we are led captive is the self-devil, if the disorder, pain, sin, in the world are not to be attributed to some person, principle, or power in eternal contradiction to the author and source of goodness, what is to become of the popular theory of Satan, the spiritual antigod, the infernally Divine phantom who has filled so prominent a place in the religious history of the world ? St. Peter in to-day's Epistle, speaks of Him as " your adversary the devil." I reply : If you think strenuously enough into the illimitable Soul, if you think yourself through second causes into the infinite originator of all causes, you will have to lose Satan as the mighty fallen archangel existing in defiance of the will of God. You will have to lose the traditional objectification of Milton's " Paradise Lost," who is the hero of that poem, the being with the dignity of a prince, the beauty of a seraph, and the power of a god. There is

simply no room for that phase of him on the mental horizon of those who are resting in the Infinite Universal Spirit whose life pulses through all things, and whose love, endless, changeless, and invincible, is working out a preordained perfection through processes which our apprehension is as yet too limited to grasp. I spoke much on this during one of the Wednesdays in Lent. If you want to keep Satan in Milton's shape you will have to limit, to lower, indeed to lose your conception of God; but you CAN keep him and OUGHT to keep him, as a verbal accommodation calculated to express that educative conflict through which all who live to the perfect development of manhood must pass. You will then recognize him as something more profound and penetrating than the old fable of nursery tradition. You will discover that the devil against whom you are to be sober and vigilant is within you, and is carried in the human heart, that he is the power IN ourselves that makes for unrighteousness, that, in that sense, he is the agency through whose training alone the human soul can emerge with a true moral life.

God is making moral beings, not innocent non-moral automata. Remember the axiom: Even God can only make anything through the process by which it becomes what it is. Even God could not make a moral being except through the process by which a moral being becomes what he is. And that process is through contest with evil and

overcoming evil. The potentiality of perfection is in every man, because God is in every man. Not to know relationship to God is to be non-moral, like the anthropoid ape. To know it and not to be loyal to it is to be immoral, like a sinful man. To strive to be true to it is to become moral. But man can only come to the consciousness of this deeply hidden Divine potentiality of perfection through the instrumentality of imperfection—in other words, of evil ; and if you prefer to call that side of human education the devil you are following precedent by doing so ; but as you value your clear conception of the immanence and power and rectitude of the Absolute, do not fall into the error of making your objectification called the devil independent of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of the one ultimate authority, the one supreme power whose name is Love ; for whatever is wrought by this demoniacal agency is " unto the will of God."

There is one attitude of mind prescribed in this morning's Epistle which I think is an essential prerequisite to this conception of the " allness " of God, and it is humility—" He giveth grace unto the humble." What is this humility ? I think it is an overwhelming consciousness of the profound and really insoluble mystery of our being, a willing acknowledgment that there are depths which we cannot mentally fathom, a recognition that the spiritual man is the real man, and the mortal " I " only a passing shadow, an

illusion to which the Father has made us subject ; compared with the spiritual ego, a mere vacuity, a negation ; but at the same time an acknowledgment that this spiritual ego, this inner self, cannot be analysed or defined. I think it is quiet, secret, watchful co-operation with the Divine potency which indwells and moulds, and deliberate recognition of, and self-adjustment to, the educative discipline which the love of God is, often painfully, applying to our animal nature. I think it is the ever teachable attitude, the attitude which is the prerequisite for entrance into all kingdoms of knowledge, whether scientific or spiritual. Blessed are the consciously ignorant, for theirs is the kingdom of knowledge. I consider that there is far more true humility, more contribution to spiritual knowledge, in the attitude of a great thinker like Professor Huxley, who acknowledges, to use his own words, the " passionless impersonality which science everywhere discovers behind the thin veil of phenomena," but which he will not venture to name or define, than in the clean-cut dogmas and *ex cathedrâ* definitions of an infallible Pontiff.

There is more humility in reverently thinking into the throbbing, quivering, universal life of which you are a part and saying, " Great Father-Soul, I realize my limitations, I know I cannot understand Thee, but Thou understandest me, and with Thee and in Thee is the secret of my

life," than in bitter controversial warfare over the definitions of the various councils of the Church.

That is what I understand by humility.

> "That low, sweet root
> From which all heavenly virtues shoot."

What is the practical outcome of this line of thought? I think it is threefold. (1) I think that if we maintain this attitude of humble dependence upon an indefinable Divine Immanence we shall find it increasingly difficult to lead a merely selfish, mundane, materialistic life. (2) I think we shall gradually escape from the isolating imprisonment of personality; being members of one body—namely, humanity—of which the Lord is the one spirit, we shall recognize that we have no true life except as a part of an organic whole, and, recognizing this, we shall be more ready to become succourers, evangelists, helpers amongst those dwelling in the slums of great cities in whom the Divine Immanence is hidden by the circumstances of their life and environment. (3) I think we shall be more driven to the protection, power, and love of our Lord Jesus, the Sacrament of the Absolute, the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual Divine Immanence, the revealer of God to man, the interpreter of man to himself, the ever-loving mighty friend and elder brother of the race who is always everywhere closer

to us than breathing, and whose guaranteed trysting-place is the Blessed Sacrament, where especially He invites us to realize the blessed injunction in this morning's Epistle: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

OUR MOTHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN

"Of His own will He brought us forth with the Word."
—JAS. i. 18 (R.V.).

THIS profound utterance of the Apostle St. James is calculated positively to fascinate the imagination if you let yourself really think into its depths, and from the apostle of practical Christianity, whose one theme is works and not faith, action and not speculation, a declaration so metaphysical, so esoteric, so thought-stimulating, is almost a surprise.

In the original Greek it is more suggestive than in either of the English versions. *βουληθεὶς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμας λόγω*—"He willed us forth from Himself by the Logos": *ἀπεκύησεν* is the word used for the birth of a child from its mother; it has no other meaning. Is it not a thought of wondrous comfort that there is motherhood in God? Ought it not to introduce a closer, a tenderer, a more appealing relationship between God and man? The Divine motherly love "brought us forth," and pleads with us for confidence and reciprocal affection, using by the

mouth of Isaiah words that are unequalled in their motherly tenderness: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb?"

Yes, the Mother Soul, ἀπεκύησεν, "brought us forth," "bore us," that by separation we might come to know our Infinite Parent as we could never have known if we had remained in the womb of His mind, just as between human child and mother there can be no conscious cognizing intercourse till they are separated.

Now, it is obvious that this inspired declaration of St. James reaches very far into the deep things of God. It proves that the irrevocability of the Divine Immanence in man is not a product of human speculation, or "new theology," or a plagiarism from Alexandrian Platonists, but an authoritative statement in the New Testament. As the child in the womb receives the nature of the mother and is born into the world bearing that nature—part of the mother—a repetition of the mother, so have we come into this world with a God nature, a Christ nature, within us, which is our eternal humanity. It is true *for* us, if it be not yet true to us, that we are the children and the representatives of the Infinite Parent Spirit by a process infinitely more intimate than anything implied by the word creation. Consider the glorious confidence that should be inspired by this assurance, that humanity has thus come forth from God—how it alters our outlook upon

the world. The nature and perfections of God, as omnipotent love and wisdom, by the process and law of evolution, are gradually advancing mankind by an agency ultimately irresistible to a more perfect condition. Based on this proposition of St. James, the belief in the logical necessity of final restitution stands upon an impregnable foundation ; the terrifying problem of the existence of evil, while it remains as an urgent motive for action, loses its power to torment. As God, the mother, is the sole generating agent of all that is, and as all that is must have been in the thought-womb of the Infinite Originator before coming into existence, the whole mystery of evil and all its terrifying cross-working purposes must be within the purpose of the eternal order and completely under the Divine overrule. As God is the Spirit Immanent in man and in all that is, there can be no independent rival to the Author of the Universe, and the infinite confusion that at present perplexes us can be nothing more than the necessary resisting agency which is the constant challenge to do good, and the ceaseless stimulus to progress.

Again, this amazing revelation of the creative motherliness proves the reality and the universality of human sonship and human brotherhood. It is the justifying and the explaining principle at the bottom of all generous strivings for a better social order and more brotherly relations between man and man ; it is the condemnation of the

miserable divisions, the heart-burnings, the suspicions that, both in politics and in religion, divide Christian from Christian in England. It ought to be the obliteration of the widening chasms between class and class. It ought to make impossible the international jealousies which provoke taunts and defiances between the rival newspapers of European nations which ultimately issue in the misery and wickedness of war. But it seems to me that this revelation of the close relationship between the soul and God should above all impress upon us individually the dignity, the priceless dignity, of human life, and the vast responsibility of being thus temples of God's Spirit, shrines of God's nature, differentiated embodiments of God's life.

This is the lesson that St. James would obviously draw from it himself and have us lay to heart, for he says, "Of His own Will He brought us forth with the Word. . . . Wherefore receive with meekness the inborn Word which is able to save your souls."

Look at this injunction with the utmost simplicity: the proposition is quite easy—it is this. Take yourself—ask what am I? I am a human life, come forth from God as a personal spirit into terrestrial birth, equipped with an hereditary God nature, implanted in an hereditary flesh nature; and the momentous question is, Will the Divine nature which has come forth hereditarily from the Mother God assert its dominion

over the flesh in which it is embodied, or will the flesh exercise the supremacy and smother and degrade the spirit, and so waste the period of this life's education and force omnipotent love to alternatives which are figuratively described as "Saving yet so as by fire," a fire which will destroy nothing but that bar-sinister in our nature which excludes us from Heavenly Society? Upon what does it depend? It depends upon our use of our measure of volition in calling into activity the *Logos emphutos*, the inborn Logos, which is "able to save our souls"; in other words, able to form character by a gradual continuous conquest of the lower life by the higher. Salvation, then, is the radiation of the Christ nature which is inborn in our souls. Note the emphasis this Apostle of practical Christianity lays upon our part of the arrangement. God has "brought you forth by the Logos," wherefore "receive with meekness the *Logos emphutos*, the inborn Word, which is able to save your souls." With meekness; that is, with watchfulness, with yielding; it is to expect and recognize and acknowledge the sacredness of an inner prompting; to tend it with prayerful culture; to beware lest human perversity check its growth; resolutely to put away, as St. James says, "All superfluity of naughtiness," an expression which each must interpret for himself; to strengthen it by mental detachment, by secret communion, by prayer, by the blessed Sacrament. As it grows

it will build up character ; moreover, it will outgrow the boundaries and limitations of individualism ; it will make you kind to others ; it will teach you to honour all men ; as it awakens within you the nature of the Mother Soul it will teach you that God's full Christ, God's true son, is not one man, though one man alone realized the ideal, but the whole multitudinous race of men, of which race God is the Father, the Mother, the Soul, the Glory, and the Eternity.

Now, here it is justifiable to point out the illumination that is poured upon this revelation of our origin and responsibility by the words of the Gospel of to-day.* You may take it for granted that there is always a subtle connexion between the altar scriptures put into juxtaposition on any given Sunday. This metaphysical talk of St. James about the Logos, " He willed us forth by the Logos," " receive with meekness the inborn Logos " ; these terms are somewhat unfamiliar to the average man, somewhat remote, inaccessible. Who, for example, will venture to define the Logos ? All true thinkers know what they mean by the expression " the Logos " ; it has been a familiar thought through all the course of the human generations, but it suffers by definition. " In the beginning," says St. John, " was the Logos "—and " God was the Logos." What existence is to being, what the spoken word is to thought, what the

* Epistle and Gospel for Fourth Sunday after Easter.

lightning flash is to electricity, that the Logos is to the creative Mother Soul : its expression, its activity, its self-utterance. The Logos is the part of God that makes, upholds, sustains all that is. "Without the Logos was not anything made that was made" ; "in Him all things consist." "By the Logos," says St. Paul, "the heavens were made." The Logos is the one life in all, the intelligence in all—in the mineral, the crystal, the lower order of animal life—and it is the dominating power in the soul of man and in the angels and archangels of the higher spheres of light and life. And this Logos, in addition to being thus universally diffused, has it ever been manifested in a more definite, personal, intelligible form ? This question suggests the differentiation of the Christian revelation from all previous Godward thoughts. Philo Judæus, the great pre-Christian Apostle of the Logos, never knew how to describe the Logos, because he never became a Christian. The Christian revelation is the unique, special, peculiar embodiment of the Logos in one representative. "The Logos," says St. John, "was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory full of grace and truth." That is, the diffused sonship, which is the attribute of humanity as a whole, the outbirth of the Mother God, became Incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth in such perfection, and completeness that the entire moral life of the Parent God was manifested in Him ; and the full result

upon human character of this Divine Immanence, the conception of which had before been vague and without outline, was shown forth in Him that men might know what the power of the indwelling spirit of God was making of them. This embodiment of the Logos in Jesus was the Divine answer to the cry of the human heart seeking to know the nature of the Originating Being which was hidden in the abstractions of speculation, and hungering to be assured of its own place in the universe of God. This embodiment of the Logos called Jesus did not stay long in the limitations of the flesh, but long enough to win the love of millions and to manifest God to man, and interpret man to Himself. How noble an aspect He presented of what a man can be in whom the Logos rules! How lofty a standard of human conduct He raised! He knew that men would resent the contrast. Plato long ago had prophesied that if a perfect man appeared the world would crucify Him, and Plato was right. And to-day's Gospel records His farewell. He says, "It is expedient for you that I go away." That "expedient for you" is a Divine law which is irrevocably interwoven into our human lives. If that "expedient for you" could only assume its rightful position in our estimation of circumstances, half the bitterness of life would be gone. In the prayer of St. Chrysostom we ask Him to "Fulfil our desires and petitions as may be most expedient for us," though we rarely mean it.

But what, in this instance, did He mean? How could it be expedient that their life, their light, should go from them? Well, apart from the axiom that real reflection rarely begins until observation ceases, it was expedient for this reason: in order that the full meaning and extent of the truth implied by the expression "the inborn Logos" should become the mental possession of humanity as a whole, and of the individuals composing humanity, it was essential that the visible objective manifestation of the Logos should be removed from the sphere of sight and touch. This "inborn Logos" embodied in Jesus is not, and never has been, personal in our ordinary sense of the word. It became personal in Jesus for purposes of observation; but it transcends all personality—it is universal, it is the Mother God repeating itself in all souls; obviously, therefore, if this truth were to be learnt, realized, appreciated, it was expedient that the visible personality which manifested it under the limitations of a human body should be removed; that men should know that this spirit of sonship, this Divine nature, this ray of the Creative Being, is the hope of their existence, the ideal of their life, the leaven of their humanity, the assurance of their perfection.

Again, He said that if He did not go the Comforter could not come. It is as if He had said that unless the objective limitation were removed from sight hearts could not receive the inestimable comfort in believing in His all-diffused, indwelling,

evolving aspect, for that is the Comforter. He identified Himself completely with the coming of the Holy Ghost; He speaks of Pentecost as His second coming; He says, "I will not leave you comfortless," "I will come unto you"; and St. Paul, in 2 Cor. iii. 17, in emphatic terms, declares, "Now the Lord," meaning the Lord Jesus Christ, "is that Spirit." And what did He mean when He said, "When He is come He will convict the world of sin"? Just this, that when Divine Sonship, the inborn Word, the Logos within, begins to stir, to make itself felt, there is a new principle of life which cannot tolerate the lower nature, but fights against it. Without Divine Sonship awakened there is no real consciousness of sin. Philo taught that where the Logos had not stirred in a man there was no moral responsibility; but when He has come, when you know that you came out from the Mother Soul, that as Jesus was so are you in this world, then when you sin, when you are selfish, irritable, unkind, impure, the punishment comes quickly in the painful sense of disturbed harmony, and you are miserable till restored. This is the Spirit of Jesus convicting you of sin.

Think of it. He has willed us into being out of Himself by the Logos. He demands of us that we should "receive with meekness the inborn Logos which is able to save our souls." Do we believe the first? Are we doing the second?

O THAT WHILE WE CAN WE MAY!

THE VISIBLE CHURCH

"To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God . . . to the intent that now . . . might be known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God." —Eph. iii. 9, 10.

SPEAKING recently from that profound utterance of the Apostle James, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word," or more literally translated, "He willed us forth from Himself by the Logos," I pointed out that this inspired declaration of the motherhood of the Infinite Originator proved that the irrevocability of the Divine Immanence in man was not a product of human speculation or a new theology, or a plagiarism from Alexandrian Platonists—but an authoritative statement in God's immortal literature which we accept as inspired. It is not a matter of surprise, it is indeed a matter of satisfaction that questions should have reached me as to how the belief in the universal Immanence of God can be held consistently with the popular view of the visible Church on earth. "Does not," I am asked, "this universal, all-

inclusive attribution of Divinity to humanity obliterate the idea of the Church as a select corporation distinct from the world at large ?"

It will be my endeavour to point out to those who care to lend me their thoughts, that these two conceptions, the universal immanence of God and the visible Church, so far from being mutually destructive are intimately associated.

I think it is well, sometimes, to submit to the reflections of the thoughtful, the strictly logical sequence of reasoning from which the conception of a visible Church emerges. It may be said to begin with the first experience of that personal search for the solution of the problem of universal existence which comes to all of us when we are mentally passing from the plane of authority to the plane of intuition ; in other words, when we cease to take things for granted, and begin to wonder whether they are as we have been told, and if so, why ? When we are first liberated from the plane of authority, when we first use the key of reverent inquiry in opening a way to the central light, we find ourselves not at once on the plane of the intuitions but on the intellectual plane ; and on that plane, philosophic induction, based on the results of scientific research, as represented by those clear thinkers who know they cannot free the universe from an originating mind, lead us on step by step to that thought-point where the affirmation of God as the Infinite Originator becomes intellectually a logical neces-

sity. Time forbids that I should trace out at length the thought-path of those mental giants who have thus followed the gleam ; but one who trod that thought-path as accurately as any man of his generation, though he did not carry it to its logical conclusion, Professor Huxley, thus forcibly expresses the point to which he did arrive. He says: "When the materialists stray beyond the borders of their path, and begin to talk about there being nothing else in the universe but 'matter' and 'force' and 'necessary laws,' I decline to follow them. 'Matter' and 'force' are mere names for certain forms of consciousness." Thus, it is an indisputable truth that what we call the material world is only known to us under the forms of the ideal world; and, as Descartes tells us, our knowledge of the soul is more intimate and certain than our knowledge of the body. So, without Bible, priest, or inspired prophet, we have got as far as this, by intellect alone, that the realm of Reality has been scientifically declared to abide in the realm of Thought, and we are more sure of the world of Mind than of the world of Matter.

John Stuart Mill saw this so clearly that he says, in his essays, that "the relation of thought to a material brain is not a metaphysical necessity, but simply a constant coexistence within the limits of observation, and the uniform coexistence of one fact with another does not make the one fact a part of the other."

These are the conclusions arrived at by keen logical thinkers, from physical investigation; and if we interpret these logical conclusions in terms of human experience, the contemplation fills us with a sense of rest and thankfulness, for they spell God and immortality. If it be a matter of science and logic, that thought is greater than matter, the unseen greater than the seen; if the relation of thought to the material brain is so little a metaphysical necessity that thought can continue after brain is dead; if throughout the material forces of Nature I am to recognize one majestic elemental principle of life—then, unless I am to do violence to my thinking capacity and reduce myself to an unspeakable dilemma, I cannot free the universe from an originating mind, and by an orderly sequence of ascent I naturally proceed to an all-creating, all-originating individuality; and though I may hesitate to define, and may be incapable of predicating what we mean by personality in the human sense to what I have found, I have none the less found God.

"A fire-mist and a planet,
A crystal and a shell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty
And a face turned from the clod—
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God."

God found and God affirmed by the intellect.

At this point, we have arrived at a contemplation calculated to fill us with a fearless rest, for it not only interests the reason but fascinates the imagination. And now, if we are true to what we know, the intuitive instinct begins to awaken, and suggests that as this one Infinite creative life is everywhere present, as it throbs in every blade and uplifts every seed, so also is it expressing itself in every man. Therefore, for purposes of self-manifestation, humanity is as necessary to God as God is to humanity. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork," but only man can manifest the moral nature and character of the Absolute. From this follows the indestructible Divinity in man and also the vast responsibility of man : each one of us is a chosen vehicle of the self-unfolding of the Absolute, and without each one of us, His self-manifestation would be lacking in some one point. God wants you and He wants me ; He desires to express Himself in you in some way different from His desire to express Himself in me ; and here comes in our individual responsibility, with which no one else on earth can interfere.

Suppose these thoughts do more than skim the surface of the mind ; suppose they reach the centre of your being, what then ? It is no use to deny it—you are out of your depth, the expanding of your God-consciousness bewilders you, you are lost in boundlessness : though you

have an opened spiritual eye, you cannot mentally connect personality with an all-diffused Soul of Souls, an inmost vital element. You can recognize that this Parent Source is manifesting Himself in man, and that when you see purity, honour, goodness, chastity, strength of principle shining from a human countenance you are *ipso facto* looking upon God, but God so diffused that you cannot really form any kind of mental conception. A universally conditioned Intelligence certainly is the immanent energy of the universe; but direct adoration of it is as difficult to the human mind as it would be in a lower sphere to endeavour to personify steam, electricity, or gravitation. You may say, "O Soul of Souls, Thou art everywhere, in Thee we live and move and have our being," and the prayer is a good one; but this yearning of the mind for an embodiment craves satisfaction. And then it is that the Soul of Souls, the drawing power of the Immanent Divinity leads us to the soul-satisfying fact of the Incarnation. "No man cometh unto Me," said the Lord Jesus, "except the Father draw him"; and the Father draws us to recognize that, in the fullness of time, the Immanent Creative Soul came, in an exceptional manner, "out of the everywhere into here"; that He sought separate and unique human enclosure in one spotless human life, one Hebrew form of flesh and blood, born of the Virgin Mary, and we are drawn to see that the Lord Jesus is the highest possible manifestation

of the moral life of the universally diffused Intelligence—that He is God made accessible, tangible, visible, personal—that we are justified in estimating the character and nature of God by Him, that whoever saw Him, with opened spiritual eyes, saw the Father, for that He was the symbol, the sacrament, the outward and visible sign of the moral nature and permanent attitude towards mankind of the Universal Soul; and His appeal was, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me"; in other words, ye believe in a universally conditioned Creative Intelligence, believe in the peculiar self-manifestation of the universally conditioned Creative Intelligence in Me.

It is as though this Immanent Mother-Soul said to each one of us: "My human child, when mentally overstrained by feeling after Me, when bewildered by My Infinity and Universality, you need not lose Me, for I have clothed Myself in a vesture of flesh and blood that you may be able to think Me objectively; so think Me as Jesus, love Me as Jesus, worship Me as Jesus; this is not all that I am, but it is enough for you." I have often illustrated this mental sequence by describing Charles Kingsley's experience, which he told me himself, of how, having found God as Universal Substance, he followed mental sequences loyally till he found God in Jesus, and his soul was at rest.

But how, you ask, how are you going to make

the conception of a visible Church emerge from this sequence of thought? In this way: What was the supreme revelation that Jesus came to unfold? You say He came to make the Absolute knowable and accessible. True, that is why He saves to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him; but was that all? No; the core, the inmost of His revelation was not only the accessibility of the Absolute, but the Divinity of man. He taught clearly, to those who have eyes to see, that He was not a being wholly apart from the brethren of the race; that though He was the only individual of the race in whom the Divine Immanence was in such perfection that He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Absolute," He did not limit this Immanence to His single Personality. He taught that He represented humanity at its climax, that what He was actually, humanity was potentially. He taught that Incarnation was a universal principle culminating in Him, that Divine Immanence was primarily of the race, and only secondarily of the individual, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in One"; in other words, He taught the Immanence of God in man as the Divine basis of human society.

It is clear that if this knowledge prevailed, in commerce, in legislation, in international relation, in theology, in social life, in home life, in individual experience—God's ideal for the race would be fulfilled. It will prevail, in the fullness

of time, because God's ideals cannot fail. Now, this ideal being universal—boundless, required a symbol, a sacrament, a manifestation, an outward and visible sign ; and the visible Church was founded to be this sign—this symbol. Just as the Absolute, being universal, required Jesus as a symbol, a sacrament, so the Divine basis of human society, being universal, requires the Church as a symbol, a sacrament. Jesus said, "As My Father sent Me, even so send I you." As I was a sample of God's character and attitude, so you are to be a sample of the Divine basis of human society—the world seeing you should recognize in you its own potentiality and God's ideal for the race. For a little while the visible Church was truly this, when they had all things in common, and were in deed as well as in word salt of the earth and light of the world. That the Churches have deflected from this standard requires no elaboration, but this is their justification, their meaning, their *raison d'être*, their purpose. No man hath seen God at any time, but the Only Begotten hath declared Him. No man hath seen the Divine Immanence in the race at any time, but the visible Church is appointed to declare it.

I ask you to see how this not only accounts for the existence of a visible Church, but accentuates the responsibility of membership with a visible Church ; we are not members of the Church for our own isolated comfort and safety, but as

a witness to the world. A Church should be, not a community of exclusives thanking God that they are not as other men are, but a luminous sample, and a prophetical pattern of God's Immanence in the race as a whole. A true member of a visible Church should realize that he or she is meant to be an individual pattern of a God-souled humanity. Do we, members of that branch of the Universal Church that bears the name of the Church of England, believe this and live it? The Church of England is a remarkable corporation. If required to define it, I should say—repudiating the ridiculous caricature that it is a mere negation between the two extremes of Puritanism on the one hand and Popery on the other, emanating from some schemer's brain in the days of Henry VIII.—that the Church of England is an institution embodying a Divine principle, founded upon the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, encased in a framework of ordinance and ritual with which it has clothed itself during the evolution of twenty centuries, and with an absolutely unbroken continuity of ordained ministry from the days of the Apostles.

At present, the Anglican Church is a recognized department of the State, and this position, entailing privilege, power, and influence, vastly intensifies the responsibility of its members.

Obviously its danger, as a nationally privileged corporation, is to become unconsciously the

repeater of the watchwords of the propertied classes in the country, and the unintelligent inheritor of traditional dogmas, phrases, and policies. I forbear to criticize past action ; it is not a wholly pleasant historical retrospect ; but to-day there is a powerful leaven spreading in the Church, a spirit and a principle which aim at identifying the National Church ever more closely with the strivings and aspirations of the people.

And with regard to the past history of the Church we may honestly say as much as this—in spite of many unworthy compromises in her corporate capacity, and in spite of a marked timidity in striking authoritatively at great popular vices, no man in his senses can deny the noble work that throughout the length and breadth of the nation has been accomplished through the agency of the Established Church. While with one hand she may have clutched too tenaciously her temporalities, with the other she has lovingly lifted out of the mire thousands amongst the masses of the people.

But the fact remains that the object of the Church—the first duty of the Church, is to be before the world the sacrament, the symbol, the outward and visible sign of the Immanence of God in humanity. As St. Paul says : " The fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, to the intent that now might be known *through the Church* the manifold wisdom of God."

One last word. If individually conscious of not having lived up to the lofty standard implied by membership with a visible Church, that injunction of St. Peter, which I am never weary of quoting, contains a consolation and an injunction : " Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord." Members of a God-souled a Christ-inhabited humanity we are. I am as an individual, you are as an individual, God-souled, Christ-inhabited. This is the mystery that binds us to God and to our fellow-men, by a tie which cannot be broken. It is our safeguard while it is also our responsibility, for this is the truth we are pledged to manifest. " Sanctify it," says the Apostle, " sanctify it in your hearts." To sanctify it is to acknowledge it, to be empowered by it, to yield to it, to suffer it to evolve, to let the God within lead us more truly to the God everywhere, Who broods over us to receive, to bless, to forgive, and Who, as we realize and manifest His Immanence, will make us in very deed what members of a Church are meant to be : Salt of the earth, lights in the world, and witnesses to others of the " Mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."

THE LIMITS OF FORGIVENESS

"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due."—MATT. xviii. 34.

THERE are two methods of interpreting the inspired parables and allegories recorded from the lips of our Blessed Lord; these two methods come under the saying of St. Paul: "First, that which is natural; afterwards that which is spiritual." Strictly speaking, it is the distinction between the esoteric and the exoteric, the rudimentary and the advanced, the philosophic and the experimental. The former—the esoteric, the advanced, the philosophic—interprets a parable in connexion with the profound, all-prevailing, universal laws behind phenomena. The latter—the exoteric, the rudimentary—interprets it in connexion with these laws as they become experimental in the superficial atmosphere of our material world. The two methods do not contradict each other any more than next year's butterfly contradicts this year's caterpillar. The rudimentary only ceases to be true, relatively to the higher truth when the

higher truth is apprehended. It is never absolutely essential for the peace of a rudimentary mind to pursue the philosophic, the esoteric, the advanced, though the pursuit is luminous with spiritual joy ; and inasmuch as we belong to two worlds and possess two very distinct natures, St. Paul tells us that the best method is : first, that which is natural, rudimentary, exoteric ; then, that which is spiritual, advanced, philosophic.

For example, we desire, let us say, to apply the powerful, realistic, parable of this morning's Gospel* to the guidance of our daily life, and we examine it first upon the natural plane. No utterance can be imagined more helpful, more encouraging. From the standpoint of our traditional Deistic conception of God, with our conventional view of the malignity of moral evil, with our somewhat clumsy theological idea of the unutterable corruption of man, born (the Augustinian theologians tell us) into the world sinful, and therefore an object of repulsion to God, conscious that we live in an atmosphere charged with temptation, while we are hereditarily on fire with sinful desires—it is simply fascinating to be met then, on the highest authority, with the revelation of a love that knows no bounds—that will forgive us not seven times, but seventy times seven, that simply sweeps away all limitations and maxims, that transcends unspeakably all human conceptions of forgiveness. As

* Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

Adelaide Proctor puts it with pardonable poetic exaggeration :

> " Kind hearts are here, but yet the tenderest one
> Has limits to its mercy. God has none.
> And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,
> But yet he stoops to give it. More complete
> Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet
> And pleads with thee to take it. Only Heaven
> Means ' crowned,' not vanquished, when it says
> ' forgiven.' "

True, there is a condition, or rather there must be a consequence, there must be a similarity of attitude. The forgiving man must live in the attitude and spirit of forgiveness, simply because the affectionate and forgiving spirit can alone realize the blessing of forgiveness. " A man who cannot forgive others, breaks down the bridge over which he must pass himself ; for every one has need to be forgiven. As when the sea-worm makes a hole in the shell of the mussel, the hole is filled up with a pearl ; so, when the heart is pierced by an injury, forgiveness is like a pearl, healing and filling the wound." Therefore, our Lord added the words to the Paternoster (variously rendered in the different records), " for we forgive them that trespass against us." He knew that a man bearing a bitter grudge was standing in the lower self and not in the higher, and that he could not assimilate God's forgiveness till he had paid the debt of love he owed to God and man.

At this point, I say, a rudimentary mind is justified in pausing in the consideration of the Gospel of to-day. It is competent for such an one to say this is enough for my soul ; there may be what you describe as a higher plane of interpretation, one that takes the thoughts into the realm of universal law, but I do not require it. Measureless forgiveness, as the antidote to ceaseless shortcomings, takes the sting out of life, and I want no more. Very well ; in that case, a preacher can only say : " Act up to the teaching on the natural plane, and the world will be better that you have lived ; the misunderstandings, and jealousies, and discords, and slanders, and sulkinesses that divide families and split up Churches, and poison Christian work amongst those who profess and call themselves Christians will pass away, and the Millennium will shortly appear."

But there is such a thing as " following on to know the Lord." There is an interpretation of this parable on the philosophic, the esoteric plane which seems—only seems, observe—to be in flat contradiction to the sweet, soothing, surface-teaching of the wholesale tenderness and leniency of God. The seeming contradiction is, however, only relative. The conclusion to be drawn from it is in fact far more full of assurance as to our ultimate destiny, and far more luminous with life-controlling power than the conclusion of facile forgiveness.

Carefully to consider this word-picture, drawn

by the Master's hand, is to recognize practically that its main teaching is this—namely, that wholesale forgiveness, under the emotion of compassion is not only a practical failure, but may be even a fatal obstacle to the formation of character by the removal of the legitimate consequences of actions, which consequences are the educators of man. Such a forgiveness almost always has to be revoked, and often, as in this case related in the parable, at heavy cost to the offender. Underlying the incidents of the parable is the refutation, by anticipation, of the rudimentary and artificial theology, which is built upon the erroneous conception that sin provokes the displeasure of, and affronts, the Father-Spirit of the universe, and that, when pleaded with, He lays aside this displeasure, ceases to be affronted, and forgives in the sense of removing consequences and penalties. Now, considered esoterically, it must be a law, universal and eternal, that there can be no such action as what we human beings understand between ourselves as "forgiveness" from God to man. Why not? For two reasons: First, because such an attitude as unforgiveness on the part of God is inconceivable in the light of the higher understanding of the relations between Divine and human; and, secondly, because the great heart-sores of humanity are not to be cured by being forgiven. You cannot cure a broken limb by forgiving it. Sin is the result of unregulated

desire ; desire is that quality in man which wars against his higher nature. And to suffer man to sin, and by forgiveness to shield him from the consequences of sin, would be to interpose a fatal obstacle to his education.

Let us examine these two assertions. First, "the thoughts of men, widening with the process of the suns," have entered upon a reaction from, even a protest against, the historic Rationalistic Deism, which interposed an immeasurable chasm between the Creator and the creature, banishing Him practically from all contact with humanity. "God is Spirit," says St. John—Infinite, Universal, Eternal Spirit. His life, His love, pulses through all that is. He is in all, through all, and yet above all. All visible things are expressions of His immanence and self-evolving life. "Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns ? Is not the vision He, though He be not that which He seems ?" Of these expressions, the highest, on this planet, is man : "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," "In Him we live and move and have our being," "Of Him and to Him and through Him are all things," "And in Him all things consist." Thus saith the Scripture. This is the new theology, the new testament. And that He may be to us, though universal, an object of religious homage and religious trust ; that our phraseology in speaking of Him may be accommodated to creaturely conditions ; that we may be saved from

sublimating God away into an abstraction, He has specifically incarnated His moral attributes in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ assures us that the same Divine Spirit which was fully manifested in Him is also immanent in us, and that we may form of it the tenderest, most filial conception, and speak of it as Our Father. "The Father in Me" is how He spoke of it Himself. Now, to imagine this indwelling, ever-evolving, Love-spirit to be capable of being affronted is as irrational as to speak of your breath being angry with you or your blood taking offence. To speak of it in the terms of Dr. Watts's famous hymn about sprinkling the frowning face of God is certainly unphilosophical, and borders even on the profane. Eastern Christianity is the most free from these conceptions, which are mainly a survival of paganism and Judaism built into the Christian system by Augustine, the father of Latin theology. Forgiveness, from the esoteric, philosophic point of view is not the good-natured oblivion of an omnipotent creditor to the infinite indebtedness of a poor, helpless, human debtor. Forgiveness is the recognition on the part of the tireless, loving, intelligent, indwelling and all-filling Spirit of an awakened and self-accusing conscience; and the impartation of a healthier, purer impulse which, by the steady, continuous conquest of the lower life by the higher, will build up character and form the Christ life within.

Secondly, as to forgiveness from the super-

ficial human point of view proving to be practically a failure. It is as though our Lord had said: "I desire that you should be tender, unselfish, ready to restore an offender until seventy times seven—not self-assertive and not vindictive; that you will learn from the obvious surface-teaching of My parable. But, if you penetrate deep enough, and are able to receive it, you will also learn that an easy-going, wholesale wiping-out of a legitimate obligation, under the impulse of compassion, may be injurious, and calculated to intensify your own or your brother's fault."

He draws a picture: The Kingdom of Heaven, the paramount power, is like a man who would take account of his servants. One cannot pay; it is assumed that there has been extravagance, dishonesty—at any rate, wrong-doing. The delinquent is confronted with the overwhelming force of the paramount power; he pleads for mercy, he offers terms of peace, he is fully, frankly forgiven, his position restored to him. But consider, does it do him good? Does it touch his character? No, it is a failure, a gross, conspicuous, lamentable failure; he is hardened in his evil courses. The covetousness and selfishness, to have borne the consequences of which would have educated him, are stereotyped and intensified. He is a worse man than he was before. The result is that it becomes necessary that there should be a deliberate reversal of the

harmful leniency. Now, he must pass through the crucial fiery ordeal, through which alone the old nature can be made to die to sin and rise again to righteousness.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." There are solemn lessons in this esoteric interpretation of the parable. Let no man resist the tender pleading of the indwelling spirit of God and cleave to some secret soul-pollution under the delusion that a merciful paramount power will make easy terms concerning it at the Day of Judgment. Let no man continue sinning, under the immoral mockery of repeated absolutions, which, without touching character, only persuade the lower nature that God is no longer affronted. "Whatsoever a man soweth that he must reap," here or hereafter. He sows a habit, he reaps a character. The Parent Spirit who caused us to be has an eternal purpose concerning each one of us, which is our ultimate, absolute perfection, effected by the conquest of the lower life by the higher. That we are thus situated is His arrangement, not ours. All are familiar with Browning's story of the ring and the book. The goldsmith would make a ring of gold; the pure metal is too hard to be fashioned into the required from. The workman makes an amalgam of gold and mercury, forms the ring, dissipates the mercury by heat, and the jewel is perfect. Such an amalgam are we, pure gold in essence, with the lower metal incorporated; with, however, the

power to be a co-worker with the Mighty Artificer in effecting the perfection He has purposed. If we will not—if we oppose a continual personal resistance to His inward suggestions, what has forgiveness to do with it? The jewel has to be made, and this parable teaches that no alternative remains but the last great act of grace, called in the Gospel Gehenna, where by God's chemistry the alloy is melted out and corruption is made to inherit incorruption; and that is "being delivered to the tormentors till we pay all that is due from us."

What is the moral of it all? The appeal is direct, personal; it is, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." Many, I know, now listening to me are living in the light—some in trustful, speechless waiting on His will; some in calm devotion to a life-work that is often full of disappointment, and brings no earthly praise. Some, on the other hand, are conscious that they are wilfully living far below their ideal, indulgent to the lower self, infirm of purpose, irresolute in action. To them the message of to-day's Gospel is: Do not look forward to an easy forgiveness at the moment of your death or at the Day of Judgment. "Awake and arise from the dead past of thy self-life." Shake off the moral deterioration of the conscious choice of a lower standard. Believe that the Kingdom of Heaven is within you, that salvation is within you. Work

out that salvation ; the instant you throw your will into it and begin the Christ will shine upon you, and all the power of the Kingdom of Heaven is yours. The Christ cannot help shining on you ; He is shining on you now, but you know it not. It is of the Christ, the ever-present, unwearied Friend of humanity, nearer to each one of us than He ever was to friend or disciple on earth, that the truly inspired lines refer, the truth of which many listening to me now can endorse :

" I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun ;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done."

ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE

"Lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."—2 SAM. i. 23.

SURELY an appropriate motto for the Saints' Day observed to-day—the Festival of St. Simon and St. Jude. We know little about these two. Simon, called the Zealot, was one of the iconoclastic enthusiasts of the first band of Christians, and early Greek writers tell us that he earned the victor's crown—of thorns, for he was crucified in Britain. St. Jude, who also went by the name of Thaddeus, is credited with the authorship of the letter bearing his name, which will be read as the Epistle for to-day, a letter which probably he did *not* write, as the Epistle is mainly built up from quotations from the apocryphal Book of Enoch. Tradition says that he was martyred in Persia by the Zoroastrian Magi. I propose to utilize the linking together of these two saints in the Liturgy of the Church to illustrate a thought which is in my mind in answer to the questions which have freely reached me in connexion with my words recently spoken upon

the forgiveness of sins. It is a consolation and a help to me to know that many of us are thinking together into the mysteries of God and man. "Why," ask some of you—"why am I unable to realize and attain to that attitude of mind described last Sunday, and know that I am forgiven, because the only relation that the Father can assume towards my sins is to take them away by curing me of sinfulness?"

Well, perhaps it is because you are mentally confusing sin with the consequences of sin. We have been so grooved into the notion that forgiveness of sin means reprieve from punishment that this solution is not improbable. Sin is taken away when the cluster of tendencies within you which have led you to infringe the moral law are brought under the dominion of the Divine nature which is also within you; and the consequences of sin, though the love of the Father will often mitigate them, are simply a matter of cause and effect, and if they remain, and you reap what you have sown, these consequences will prove your best education. Again, perhaps, for a reason into which I will not enter now—namely, that the nearer you get to the vision of God the more detestable do certain past actions appear to you—your sensation arises from your increasing inability to forgive yourself.

But the answer which I desire to give, which will make a demand upon your thinking capacity, implies an entire shifting of the whole mental

point of view, and when realized, transforms the entire aspect of life. It is based on the principle that man's only real being is spiritual and Divine, and when this principle is awakened into consciousness it has power to control all lower conditions, gradually transforming them; and the one essential evidence of this Divine element being truly awakened is that it immediately recognizes a oneness with humanity, it transcends and overflows the isolation of personality, it reaches forth to blend with and to bless other lives, it sees others as God sees you, and it implies that as God is holding you free from all accusations of guilt, you must also hold others thus free, realizing that your only true attitude towards an offending brother-man is not to desire to be revenged, but honestly to endeavour to better his condition, to cure him by striving to impart to him from yourself, by the telepathy of sanctified will and kindly thought, accompanied by helpful action, the higher, healthier, purer life which you have begun to realize in yourself. Is not this the reason why our Lord appended to the petition in the Paternoster "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," the commentary, "for if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses"? It is under the ceaseless illumination of the teaching of the Holy Spirit that we are able to perceive the inwardness of that saying. It can only mean that acceptance

of the revealed standing of the race as indwelt by God, as consisting of differentiated atoms of the Infinite Originator, implies such an identity, a oneness, between human beings, and such an obligation of loving service between man and man, that no personal affront could release man from the duty of seeking an offender's welfare from his heart.

Is it not more than probable that we do not realize all that is meant by the forgiveness of sin, simply because we are hugging this sense of forgiveness to ourselves, shutting it up into the isolation of personality, gloating over the feeling, "*I* am forgiven, *I* am saved," and not extending it and causing it to overflow to others ?

You are forgiven because you were never unforgiven, personal affront being impossible between God and you. So long as you accept this position as between God and you, and do not acknowledge it as between you and your fellow-man, you are standing in the old unawakened self, and not in the bright light of the full revelation of the indwelling of God in man. How transcendently did the Perfect Elder Brother evidence on the cross this characteristic of the recognition of the indwelling Divine when, after hanging for three long silent hours in agony, He opened His lips, not to condemn or to reproach, but to intercede and to bless, to impart His life by the beauty of His example—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"! The Divine

gift in them is unawakened. It is not their true Divine ego that is perpetrating this outrage—"they know not what they do." In many of those who heard must the Divine nature have been afterwards awakened when they thought over that utterance of Everlasting Love.

Once before when speaking on forgiveness I touched upon this profound aspect of the subject by drawing attention to the etymology of the old Saxon word "forgive": it is "forthgive"—give forth—with an extended sense of going forth to give, to communicate, a power or a knowledge possessed by ourselves which, when received by a brother in humanity, takes away his trespasses by revealing to him his true relation to God. Surely it is part of the magnetic law of the diffused Divine life which is the attribute of humanity as a whole, and which knits the human race into an organic spiritual unity, that if you forbear to communicate your gift you, as it were, break the electric circuit, insulate yourself, and for the time lose your own power.

I will imagine that you put certain questions to me. You say, do be more explicit in defining what you mean by this revealed standing of the human race in God which we are under the obligation of forthgiving to others under the penalty of losing consciousness of it. I reply, it is the indissoluble union in essential nature of man with God. It is the knowledge that God, the Universal Mind, is in man seeking

to express Himself ; that for this mode of self-expression man is as necessary to God as God is to man ; that, as God is universal, the true life of each one of us is not in the imprisonment of isolation, but in the organic whole, and to see this is to look with a larger knowledge on humanity ; that when this indwelling life and love would bless and help, He does it through the wills and thoughts of those most yielding to His influence ; and, therefore, when I forthgive, as the Lord Jesus did forthgive on the cross, it is God blessing others through me, or, as our blessed Lord expressed it, " The Father in Me doeth the works."

I will imagine that you ask me another question : How and when does the area of normal consciousness awaken and expand so that the individual is able to claim this inheritance and say, " In me God lives and moves and has His being " ? Does it come gradually or suddenly ? I answer : Both. Generally this spiritual insight which overflows isolated individuality and forthgives is the result of assiduous mental practice, and comes slowly, thrusting its way through a mass of traditional and conventional limitations. I imagine that in no one does it become the normal and habitual attitude of life—that would imply that education was complete. It was absolutely perfect in the Lord Jesus, but even He for a moment lapsed into the Hebrew Deism when, in the agony of dereliction, He cried,

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" But the minutest realization of it, even a glimpse of it, alters the whole aspect of life.

Once I saw it come suddenly at an evangelistic service in a tent, and it was in the person of one who had been a professed secularist and an active propagandist of infidel theories. I saw that strange light come into his eye which Plato thought was the sign of a memory of some bygone existence; I saw him fall on his knees; I heard the cry from his lips; and when, on the following day, he was confronted by his old companions with the customary so-called "mistakes of Moses" and moral difficulties of the Old Testament which form the stock-in-trade of the professional religion-destroyer, he replied, "I cannot answer the difficulties, but neither now do I desire to do so. One thing I know: whereas I was blind, now I see." The spirit, in its hidden, thought-transcending operation, was witnessing with his spirit that he was a son of God. That man was under my observation for ten years afterwards, and I never knew him waver. That supreme moment appeared to have reconstituted his whole being, and his influence as a forthgiver was most powerful. He then went to the colonies, and I know not whether he is now on this earth.

One other question I will imagine you put to me: Have I ever seen this forthgiving of this diffused, immanent God-life in operation? I have. I have seen it in operation in St. John's

Church. When it is in operation, it is God thinking and willing through us in a particular direction. It is then dynamic, and it causes things to happen that would not happen without it. More than once when devout hearts in this Church have been in the right attitude you have been then "forthgivers."

Another question you ask me: What has this line of thought to do with St. Simon and St. Jude? Just this. Why are these two put together? Why, though widely separated in their ministry and martyred in lands far apart, are they here blended? Do you say they were brothers, sons of Cleophas, nephews of Joseph the husband of Mary?—well, that does not satisfy me.

The Western Church, to which we owe not a little pagan leaven, sometimes builded better than it knew. I think it is because they were known to be illustrations of that overlapping, forthgiving, spiritual affinity of which I have been speaking. I think their juxtaposition arises from a perhaps unconscious apprehension, on the part of the compilers of the Liturgy, of the profound truth of that mystic knowledge of a oneness which does sometimes exist between communicating minds. Is this fanciful? Why should it be? There are three spheres of apprehension of Holy Scripture—the authoritative, the rational, and the intuitive. The believer in direct Divine dictation is in the first sphere, the higher critics are in the second sphere, the open-eyed are in the third sphere; and the open-

eyed are the truest appreciators of Holy Writ, though they are indifferent to historic narrative, and care nothing for literal accuracy. In all ages, under all dispensations, there have been the open-eyed. Spinoza, Philo, the composers of the Kabbala, Jacob Boehme, Emanuel Swedenborg, all saw by inward light glorious meanings in much that seemed unedifying in the letter.

I believe these two are thus commemorated in union to illustrate that one human brother can overflow isolation and stimulate brain waves and spirit motions in another though one is in Persia and the other in Britain, for though we are separate entities, "there is one body and one spirit."

And now for your last question to me: "Why," I imagine you asking me—"why do you weary us with this abstract esoteric line of thought? What possible practical good can it be to us?" I answer, I do it because I long to realize more myself, and that you should realize more, the responsibility attaching to the knowledge of higher truth, of believing that one life pulses through all things; because I desire that we shall escape from that dream of isolated individuality which is the illusion—what the Oriental calls *maya*, what St. Paul calls the "vanity"—of earth-life; because I desire that we shall assiduously practise this form of "forthgiving," of breathing forth spiritual power till it becomes more the normal attitude of the soul; because, inasmuch

as this kind of "forthgiving" is the thought of God starting from your own soul and acting as a dynamic force upon the object of your solicitation, it affords an additional motive for watchfulness, purity, self-control, meditation, communion, unselfishness; also because this wireless current of God's dynamics, this forthgiving of spiritual affinity, reaches into the other world, abolishes death, flashes from mind to mind across the gulf between dimensions, unites us with the beloved who are gone, opens a channel from their minds to ours.

> "Star to star vibrates light,
> So may soul to soul pierce through a finer
> Element of her own."

Finally, the road to a clearer realization of this truth is the daily practice of mental self-surrender to the indwelling Oversoul; daily reaffirmation of the transcendent truth that the Supreme Intelligence is the one sole power in all things and all men; that, as the offspring of the Infinite Spirit, you, and all men, are as indestructible as God, and that when your soul is full of heaviness and disquieted within you for the wickedness of the world, for the alienation and stubbornness of some loved one whose eyes are holden, you may not despair, but echo those words of assurance:

> "Father of all, he urges his strong plea,
> Thou lovest all—Thy erring child may be
> Lost to himself—BUT NEVER LOST TO THEE."

THE ATONEMENT

"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."
—Rev. xiii. 8.

QUESTIONS reach me which seem to indicate the exact thought-point at which the conception of the Immanence of God puts a strain upon rudimentary theology; for whenever I emphasize unusually strongly the essential inseverability of God and man, which is the bedrock of my faith, I am met with the same anxious questioning. Recently I spoke of the oneness of the human race as consisting of separate differentiated entities of the One Universal Divine Consciousness which is God. I said that I could see, as the ideal, that the whole process of our education in the flesh ought to consist of a gradual expanding and enlarging of our self-consciousness, and the awakening from the dream of isolated individuality, which is the illusion of our earth condition, until it attains that perfection in which it loses the consciousness of itself as something apart from God, and finds its true being in most absolute union with the universal origin-

ating life, and that one symptom of the growing of this Christ-Spirit within would be its suggestion that we should avert our minds from, deny, ignore, the outer self, cease to regard as real outer conditions, outer joys and griefs, and live more in the universal life which is not only in us, but in all humanity, and that this mental attitude would greatly condition our thoughts of and conduct towards our fellow-men; and I used the juxtaposition of Simon and Jude as an illustration of this conscious unity of spirit overflowing from one man into another man which had probably been recognized by the Church. Now some, to whose winged thought I am indebted, and who are probably expressing the minds of others, say to me: "In this noble belief that universal humanity is indwelt by God there is no room for the doctrine of the Atonement, which has been represented as the fundamental dogma of Christianity." The question is, What do you mean by the Atonement? If you mean that there is no room for the conventional conception of a substitutionary propitiation whereby black may be called white, while it knows itself to be black, I agree. It is just possible that my own endurance of suffering after deadly sin might give me back my self-respect; the endurance of my deserts by another could only make me despise myself the more. There is no hint of this curious and artificial theology, which may be described as Christianized Judaism, or purified

paganism, in any of our Lord's recorded words, and the conception is wholly absent from His typical parable, His greatest teaching—the parable of the Prodigal Son.

If, however, you mean the real doctrine of the Atonement, as it is revealed in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—namely, that the Elder Brother, in the name of the race of which He was the representative, offered to the Father-Spirit a perfect and absolute submission of will, and that in this offering through the organic spiritual unity of the Body of humanity the whole race is virtually at-one-d to God, through the attained perfection of one Member of the race, and that He—the Elder Brother—is now, as the indwelling sonship of each individual, slowly working out that same at-one-ment between the human and the Divine in every separate son and daughter of the Lord Almighty—if you mean that, then I contend that the doctrine of the Atonement is an absolute necessity to esoteric thought as the explanation of the purpose of the Incarnation, the interpretation of the mystery of our own dual nature, the indication of the direction of human effort for improvement, and the conspicuous guarantee and pledge that somehow, and somewhen, and somewhere, the Divine and the human within us shall be at-one-d as they were in Him, for "As He is, so are we in this world." But to see this it is necessary to be emancipated from some conventional planes of

thought. For example, it is necessary to realize that what is called redemption is not an afterthought, a generous Divine expedient for the renovation of a marred purpose, but the predetermined operation of the Father-Spirit whence we came, before the world was. This is very clearly expressed in the words, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The clear sight of this eternal reality lifts the mind above some of the most serious differences which have divided Christian thought. Rudimentary and imperfect conceptions of the work of Christ in redemption have originated obviously from inadequate conceptions of the Divine Nature as related to the conditioned or human nature. They have arisen from the belief in the existence of an immeasurable chasm between the Creator and the creature, and from an instinct of infinite indebtedness on man's part—an indebtedness that no human effort could avail to remove. This idea of indebtedness has insinuated itself into Christian definitions, gradually expanding and becoming less material under the increasing realization of the Nature of God. In the earliest Christian times the impression was widespread that man's transgression had made the human race debtor to the devil, who, like the brigands of the mountains of Sicily, required a ransom. Augustine virtually accepted the theory, and taught that Jesus, as incomparably the most precious specimen of the race, was accepted in

payment of the debt as the substitute for humanity. Athanasius, however, before the days of Augustine, contended that whatever conception of ransom attached to the death of Christ was paid to God. Anselm, the Italian Archbishop of Canterbury in the eleventh century, first definitely formulated the two theologies into the dogma which, in varying forms, has prevailed and which has been spoken of as the scheme or plan of salvation. According to this scheme, infinite indebtedness has been incurred by man to an infinitely Holy God, an indebtedness impossible to be discharged by sinful creatures, and the death of the sinless Son of God was the expiation exacted by an omnipotent abstraction called justice. In spite of the strange theological confusion between two Persons in the Trinity implied by this idea, in spite of its utter inadequacy as a means of redemption for the race (for, whether considered as Calvinism, which taught that only those predestined to salvation could profit by it, or as Arminianism, which taught that only those who should hear of it and accept it could be saved by it—it could only avail for a very limited number of the race), it has not been without its converting power upon the souls of men ; it has delivered many from the paralysing phantom of the old terror of judgment ; it has brought an antidote to many for the soul-wounds of humanity ; where it has come home to the heart and the conscience, it has promoted an intense

personal love for the Lord Jesus as the willing victim substituted for the sinner.

A faulty conception will often provide an adequate working hypothesis, as the geocentric conception of astronomy, since proved to be false, enabled astronomers to foretell eclipses. The faulty conception of the Character of God—such, for example, as that conveyed in a hymn by Dr. Watts, when he speaks of God's frowning face being calmed by drops of Jesu's blood—has led many, under the agonizing conviction of sin, to cling with indescribable yearning and gratitude to God's Pacifier, the Saviour of the world. Every one knows of the Englishman who, moved with compassion, bought a negro girl at a slave auction and gave her her freedom, and how, from that moment, she devoted her life to her rescuer, serving him with the utmost fidelity, and, when questioned as to her fanatical devotion, would repeat again and again, "He redeemed me, he redeemed me." With a similar intensity has the Lord Jesus been loved by those who say, "He took the cup in both His Hands, and with one tremendous draught He drank damnation dry." But such devotion has not been always free from the mental confusion expressed with simple frankness by the little child who said, "Yes, I love Jesus, but I hate God." It is, moreover, responsible for many a strong delusion under which men have satisfied themselves that they were what they called "saved," while their

lives were unlovely and unprogressive. From such partial truths the mind of man is lifted by the teaching of the Holy Spirit in that sublime utterance, " The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Whatever may be the explanation our Father will one day give us, when we know even as we are known, of the mystery of what we now call moral evil, the self-sacrifice of the Divine life in the redemption of the world from moral evil was a fact in the eternal counsel before the world was, before moral evil existed, before man sinned. So far as we can speak of time and succession in connexion with the deep things of God, redemption was not a scheme to amend Creation, but Creation was an incident to fit into redemption. In the order of thought God was Redeemer before he was Creator. The pagans taught a God above all Gods, called Necessity; for the word "necessity" read "love," and the teaching is true, for the living and true God, self-revealed in the Gospel, is under the law of necessity—the necessity of His own being, which is love. Love, and self-utterance in sacrifice, are synonymous terms. Creation is love uttering itself, clothing itself, conditioning itself in a body, of which body the human race is the crown and climax. The real self-sacrifice of God is not His embodiment in one man, but His conditioning Himself in all men. The embodiment in one man is the climax of his operation in all men; the Divine Nature, the

Lamb of God Nature, the redeeming Nature, burying itself, as it were, as a Divine redeeming Seed in man, is God at-one-ing the race, and every human life on earth is an act of God in self-sacrifice. The inmost life in every one, the true being in every one, is the Divine Nature, and its work is to redeem the whole man to God, to unloose the human soul from the bonds of sinful tendencies, and in the slow, gradual overcoming in each one the self-will, the stubbornness, the anger, the lust, is the suffering of the Divine Nature. Thus, atonement is not an isolated act, but a maintained attitude of spiritual evolution, the working out of inmost Divine spirit, overcoming gradually all the resistance and antagonism of the outward sinful nature, and bringing it into conformity with the universal Divine life, and when that is accomplished we shall be in heaven, for heaven is not locality, but character. And this is "through our Lord Jesus Christ," for our Lord Jesus Christ is that manifestation or aspect of the Divine Nature, that self-utterance in sonship of the Divine Being, who is the inmost in every man—"the mystery hid from the foundation of the world, Christ in you," says St. Paul. He is the evolving spirit who is slowly transfiguring the race from within, and that He may be witness, pledge, promise, guarantee, helper to all, He comes "out of the everywhere into here," conditions Himself in a separate human personality, "the Word is made flesh and dwells among us";

the redeemer aspect of the Creator, in the fullness of time, manifests Himself visibly, and in that form lives outside us and for us, as our Representative, the life He is striving to evolve within us as our inspiration. But you ask, "Did not Jesus pay a price for our redemption?" He did. The price that Jesus paid to win our love and gratitude was the life laid down in surrender of the lower human will, in denial of the purely natural self, in mortification of all human ambition, in crucifixion of every selfish impulse, and, in that "He was tempted in all points like as we are," He is "able to succour them that are tempted, and save to the uttermost them that come unto God in Him." If an able surgeon saves your life in a crisis, he has, in a sense, bought you with a price, and the price he has paid for that act of redemption is the price of years of study and application combined with love of humanity and an intense devotion to duty. And the price Jesus has paid to be able to succour and save us is His lifelong acceptance, as the representative of the race, in the completest manner, of the will of Heaven expressed in self-denial, suffering, and death, and inasmuch as in Him is the type, promise, and potency of the salvation of the race, and as He, as the Eternal Word, is immanent in all men as the deepest ground of their personal self-conscious life, atoning—at-one-ing—the human and Divine, I contend that this true doctrine of the Atone-

ment becomes an absolute necessity to esoteric thought.

It accounts for everything, it interprets everything, it fits into everything, it unites all religions, satisfies all instincts, obliterates all false conceptions, and, while it universalizes salvation and exalts the objective personality of the Divine Saviour, it individualizes human effort, and teaches man the obligation of "working out his own salvation because it is God that worketh in Him." The conclusion is obvious; it is expressed in the words "Christ in you the hope of glory." There is the highest declaration of Christian philosophy. You have a dual nature. The highest part of that dual nature is the Christ-nature, which is striving to unfold itself in you, that it may in time "make of the twain"—the human nature and the Divine nature—"one new man." That is the atonement, the at-one-ment in you. Resist that Christ-nature, and it will bring you to the prison of spirits, out of which you will not come till you have paid the uttermost farthing. Give to that Christ-nature careful, watchful, co-operation, and it will lead you to a bright and endless future, not suddenly, but by daily betterment, by slow degrees, by the gradual conquest of the lower life by the higher; for, with Tennyson—

> "I hold it truth with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

AUTO-SUGGESTION

"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin."—Rom. vi. 11.

THESE words occurred in the Epistle for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, and inquiring minds put questions to me as to their meaning, and as to the meaning of the words of the Gospel for the same Sunday. I am asked: What did St. Paul mean when he tells us to "reckon ourselves dead to sin"? and what did Our Lord mean when He said that if we called our brother a fool we were in danger of the Gehenna of fire? Well, what did St. Paul mean? Does he desire to encourage us in hypocrisy, in pretending to a sanctity that we well know we do not possess? Whatever we are, we do not desire to qualify as hypocrites. Our Lord says that, "except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." And He tells us that the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was hypocrisy. He says, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites."

Does not St. Paul mean this: That by the power of thought, in the realization of the truth of our being in God, we may conquer the demands of the flesh nature, and control all lower conditions in this complex mechanism that we speak of as ourselves? Is it not another aspect of that glorious truth, the Immanence of God? Does he not mean auto-suggestion?

The Greek word translated "reckon yourselves" is λογίζεσθε — tell yourselves, assure yourselves. Does he not mean a strong mental denial of one set of experiences and impulses, and an equally strong affirmation of others, and the anticipation that the series thus denied will wither as a plant will wither when deprived of water?

Philosophically, this principle advocated by St. Paul is worthy of consideration, for it is a thoroughgoing optimistic idealism, brought into practical application on the plane of ordinary experience. We are to believe and to affirm—to tell ourselves—that the Spiritual and Divine element in us constitutes our only real being, and that, when awakened into consciousness and kept prominent and active by thought-concentration, it will rule the whole man.

There is little doubt that this principle of auto-suggestion is rapidly being recognized on the physical plane in the sphere of the influence of mind over body. On this plane the principle works both ways—both for disease and for health; the mind, dwelling constantly on par-

ticular symptoms of disease, renders the body liable to be affected by that disease.

In an obituary notice in the *Lancet* of a great nerve doctor, who died from paralysis, this is practically acknowledged, for we read: "It is remarkable that he wrote much about diseases of the nervous system, thus giving another example of the curious coincidence that not infrequently medical men die of the diseases to which they have given special attention."

It certainly tells for health. In spite of many failures, and premisses that, in my opinion, are erroneous, and an exaggeration of the matter-denying philosophy of Berkeley, the so-called Christian Scientists may fairly claim to have established the principle that the sphere of causes is the mind. Their counsel to their disciples is: "Ally yourself in thought with the resistless Divine life within you as the one true fact of your being. Obliterate the obstructions of doubt and fear, that the Divine force within may have scope to work; 'reckon yourself dead' to all the illusions of the false self; 'reckon yourself alive' to all the elements of health and power, and strength, and perfection, and this mental process will result in change throughout the whole physical frame." And it certainly does, and in numerous instances, to some of which I am able to testify from personal observation, the result is the cure of disease.

It is almost a matter of surprise, considering

the training of the man in the strictest sect of the Pharisees, to note the strong grasp of spiritual intuition with which this truth—known to the Easterns 2,000 years B.C.—is adopted by St. Paul, and applied to the Divinely ordered method of spiritual growth.

"Reckon yourself dead to sin—reckon yourself alive to God." The road to a true and noble life, he would say, is the intense, purposeful focussing of your mental faculties upon all that is high, noble, pure, Divine, and the deliberate, persistent, ignoring, denying all that contradicts it. The seed of action is impulse. Meet the impulses within you on their own ground—where you find them. They are all in the mental region—think yourself into God—reckon yourself alive to God.

Now, with regard to that strange saying of our Lord about the Gehenna of fire, which is a puzzle to some. Is not precisely this conception of watching and conquering the impulses the meaning of the whole passage? It is so veiled under the hyperbole of Oriental metaphor that this teaching is liable to be overlooked. The whole of this part of the Sermon on the Mount might be summarized into the axiom: "Take care of the impulses, and the actions will take care of themselves." When concerned as to wrong action, search out the springs of that action, and deal with them. The impulse contains the potentiality of the action, and impulse resides

in the mental region. "As a man thinketh in his heart," says Solomon, "so is he." And, as Shakespeare says in "Hamlet," "There's nothing, either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Thus, as the mind is the womb of the impulse, and the impulse is the mainspring of the action, fill the mind with God—"reckon yourself alive to God"—and your action will be right.

Is not that the Lord's meaning? Your righteousness, He says, must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. The principle of Phariseeism was that God was to be pacified by certain external religious observances and sundry outward pious actions. The ethics of Christianity, on the other hand, the Lord implies, would emerge from a close study of the seeds of actions within. Right-thinking would produce right-doing, and a mind consciously and purposely God-inhabited would transfigure conduct and regenerate nature, for all love and faith and tenderness, all purity and nobility and self-sacrifice—all these, in their utmost intensity, exist in the universal mind which is their source. And this all-inclusive, all-transcending, all-diffused universal mind is the God within us—the Christ in man the hope of glory. Our Lord illustrates this truth by enumerating the fatal results of certain offences against the sacred law of brotherhood, which could have been easily avoided by crushing in its inception the impulse which, unchecked, bore fruit in the action. "Whosoever is

angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment"; in other words, a man of unrestrained irritability, easily angry, impulsive, passionate, is qualifying himself to be a prisoner before the court —the local court mentioned in Deut. xvi. 18—for some unbridled action following his anger. "Whosoever shall say unto his brother, Raca (Worthless), shall be in danger of the Council"; in other words, a habit of cold, sneering, contemptuous vituperation is the high road to the violation of the Jewish blasphemy laws—an offence tried before the Council of the Sanhedrin and punishable by death. "And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the Gehenna of fire"; in other words, he who has so accustomed himself to abusive language towards his brother-man as to call him "Moreh," here translated "Thou fool," —really an untranslatable word of dread import among the Jews, as implying a denial of the parentage of God; the word for the use of which Moses was excluded from Canaan, and there translated "ye rebels"—would certainly provoke a blow. The blow would produce retaliation, and might result in homicide, and the subsequent casting of the body of the murderer, after execution, into the Valley of Hinnom, there to be consumed, with the refuse of Jerusalem, by the beneficent transmuting worm that died not, or in the sanitary fire that was not quenched, but kept for ever burning to destroy the offal of the city. Therefore, our Lord would suggest,

examine thyself, look well if there be any leaven of these impulses within thee. If thou findest in thy heart poison-seeds that thy better nature condemns, wait not till they have developed into action. If you are conscious of the impulse to irritability, hate, envy, jealousy, revenge, overwhelm them by mentally claiming your inheritance of your true being in God. Ask yourself: Is this how God thinks me? Is this God's ideal for me? Is this how the indwelling Spirit wishes to think and to will through me? In other words, reckon yourself dead to these ungodly impulses of the lower self—reckon yourself alive to the loving purpose of God. Open the soul inwardly by a powerful mental effort to the vital energy of the interior indwelling Kingdom of Heaven, the God within you; and impulses, affections, imagination will be new-born within you.

Our Lord conveys, under the veil of metaphor, a profound warning. If I will not thus, by the power that worketh in me, overcome the self-life, the nature-life; if I allow the lower impulse to beget actions, and actions to form habits, and habits to harden into necessity, and in that condition pass out of this brief stage in our endless human career, what then? Beneath the Oriental allegory we may learn "what then." God is love and God is fire; therefore, fire is love. And, in what Browning calls that "Sad sequestered state, where God unmakes but that He may

remake the soul He else had made in vain," I must abide until I have paid the uttermost farthing of the debt I have incurred to the humanity of which I am part. How I know not. I know that love is eternal, and will preside over the process. I know that somehow the Divine over-soul will engender within the heart the disposition which will bring the means of payment. The last farthing will be paid by the genuine desire to pay, by the impulses being rectified, and the soul will be delivered; but the fact remains, and it is the lesson of that passage. Had the impulses of the natural self-life been reckoned dead, and the germ of the ideal humanity been reckoned alive, and had this mental attitude been persisted in until it became a habit, the necessity and ordeal of this debtors' prison would have been obviated.

From this consideration certain corollaries follow: (1) What possible guarantee have I that this power is within me—this power of drowning a wrong impulse in the flood of Immanent Divinity, before it develops into wrong action? How do I know that this suggestion is not little more than a kind of mental trick, a self-delusion? How is it possible for me to "reckon myself," "assure myself that I am" dead to sin, alive to God? Well, Channing, who was a profound thinker, once said, "I pity the man who recognizes nothing God-like in his own soul." I fear very many are candidates for Channing's pity, but

St. Paul gives the answer. He ends his sentence with the words "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Yes; but what do these words mean? They are perilously familiar, as they form the end of every prayer in the Liturgy. They mean that Jesus Christ is the full guarantee of the indissoluble union in essential nature of man with God; they mean that God, the Universal Mind, is in man seeking to express Himself. This revelation has been given to us "in Jesus Christ our Lord," and this signifies identification, not substitution. It means that the perfect Elder Brother, who came to be the visible embodiment of the moral nature of the Absolute and the perfect specimen of God's ideal of the race, did not do anything instead of us, but literally, for us, that He might assure us that the Divinity which was in Him so transcendently is also in us potentially; that "as He is, so are we in this world," that we are "joint-heirs," with Him; that we are predestined to be conformed by the same power to His image and His perfection; that as He was raised up, as we read in this same Epistle, by the glory, the *doxa* of the indwelling Father, so we, by the same glory, the same *doxa*, are to walk in newness of life. God in Him, "the Father in Me," was the power of His life—God in us is to be the secret of our regeneration. It means the true doctrine of the Atonement as it is revealed in Hebrews x.; namely, that the perfect specimen of the race of which He was

the representative, offered to the universal creative Father Soul a perfect and entire submission of the human will, and, that in this offering, through the organic spiritual unity of the body of humanity, the whole race is at-one-d to God through the attained perfection of one member of the race. And that He, the Elder Brother, is now, as the indwelling spirit of sonship in each individual, slowly working out that same at-one-ment between the human and Divine in every separate son and daughter of the Lord Almighty.

So He, His Spirit, His power, His nature, as the visible embodiment of the Immanence of God in humanity, the perfect specimen of the Logos or self-utterance of God, which is the glory and attribute of the race as a whole, is within us as a glorious conquering vitality, ready to be called into activity. (2) Then, for me to say, I cannot reckon myself dead to sin, and alive to God—to accept myself, and leave myself as I find myself—is a profound denial of God, and a rejection of the Christian revelation. Carlyle was right when he said: "Nonsense, the impediment is in thyself—here or nowhere is thy kingdom." (3) Then, inasmuch as humanity is a God-souled solidarity, for me to accept and leave the world as I find it is a similar denial of God. If I believe the teaching of to-day, I shall become conscious of a deeper sense of the call for mutual sympathy and helpfulness in the human brotherhood. I shall understand the purpose of that Congress being now

held in London, I shall recognize a oneness with humanity, which transcends and overflows the isolation of personality ; I shall know that if I am content to look on while my brethren needlessly suffer, I am sinning against the brotherhood. I may be externally religious, but when I " bring my gift to the altar " I had better remember that my brother hath something against me. I have been indifferent to the causes of crime and misery ; I have given a guilty and cowardly acquiescence to a condition of things which is a shame and a curse on our civilization. And the Sermon on the Mount points out the inevitable result of that. I must pay my debt to the uttermost farthing.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter ? If I believe St. Paul's injunction, I shall do this : I shall take myself in hand, and watch my impulses, and if I detect the stirring of such as I know are of the lower nature, I shall not even pay them the respect of recognition, but at once extinguish them by negation, by " reckoning them " illusory, non-existent, dead. And I shall fill their place by affirmation, by " reckoning myself," my true self, my ego, " alive to God."

In what words ? Any form of words will do, so long as we affirm positively our oneness with God's omnipotent indwelling power. Suppose we are in sudden strong temptation, and with true thought-concentration say secretly : " I am a manifestation, an expression, of God ; His life, love, wisdom, power, pulses through me at this

moment ; I am in God, and God in me." What then ? You have not changed God's attitude towards you in the slightest degree by this affirmation, but you have changed your attitude towards Him, and, by thus affirming, you have put yourself into harmony with the Divine purpose, and set free influences of strength and goodness and power which are always working for your perfection.

So, if I would grow in grace, in strength, in purity, and in the knowledge of God ; if I would help the Christ to win the world ; if I would help to fulfil the transcendent utterance of the Christ in John xvii.—"That they may be one, even as We are one ; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one "—I must believe that humanity is God-souled, that God's greatness is the infinity of attributes which I myself possess ; and I must strive habitually mentally to claim that indwelling power, and to "reckon myself dead to sin, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

O.H.M.S.

"There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."—Acts xxvii. 23.

RARELY, in the written record, is so much consolation and stimulation concentrated in a single sentence as in this utterance of St. Paul which we have just heard read in the second lesson. It is an inspired tabloid of thought-suggestion.

"There stood by me the angel of God"; I gather that he saw the angel. This opening of the soul's vision to see into the higher, purer world around us is not common, and I am not prepared to say that it is wholly desirable, but it is of unutterable value that some should possess the gift, for that which is true for one of the children of Abba Father is true for all, whether they know it or not. And it is here revealed to us that in the incidents of the busiest life, in the midst of perils and anxieties, celestial beings beyond our powers of perception, have clear and definite relationships with us, ministering to us,

sympathizing with us, mourning over our failures, rejoicing over our repentances, suggesting noble aspirations, putting into our minds good desires, true and lovely thoughts. We know not what the angels are. The conventional conception of beautiful women with impossible wings is pure imagination ; we only know that there is a brilliant host of ethereal intelligences, always beholding the face of Abba Father, yet somewhere in our atmosphere, grouping round our very heads, blending with our worship and mingling with our lives. I am myself a believer in that possible fourth dimension of space, as different from length and breadth and height as each of these is different from the other. I believe there is another world, as it were, within this world, transcending it, pervading it, surrounding it, as the atmosphere and space of a room surround a goldfish in a globe—the same world and yet another world. Let those who imagine this conception to be fantastic read and study the article on "measurement" in the last edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" by Sir Robert Ball, the greatest geometrician in the Empire, and they will recognize that the probability of the fourth dimension is not absurd or unscientific.

How many times has it been true of us in moments of peril or of dereliction, "there stood by me this night the angel of God," and we knew it not! Think of it in some long night of sleeplessness or anxiety. What is the first word that

Paul is privileged to hear from the lips of this angel, either by direct audition, or by projection to the inner intelligence of the intuitive self? "Fear not." If only we could be cured of fear! There is little doubt that the so-called Christian Scientists are right in this—that they trace physical ill to its source in some wrong thought or mental habit; they contend that to free the mind from fear would cut at the root of many an outward disorder. It is manifestly true on the spiritual plane of thought. In Wisdom x. 12 we read: "Fear is nothing else but a betraying of the succour which reason offereth"; "the succour which reason offereth" is the strong mental affirmation of the ceaseless love of the responsible Mother Soul, the infinite Creative Intelligence in whom we live and move and have our being, and who says to us, "Live your life in a sublime spirit of confidence and determination; rest in the Lord, for the immortality of God is embodied in your nature." The first message of the angel of God is "Fear not."

Then he says, "The angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve." The whole philosophy of life is in those words—"whose I am." Paul knew that secret of the Lord—God's absolute proprietorship of every human life. He knew whence he came, whence we all came. "I came out from the Father," said the Archetypal Man, and in saying that He spoke the life-history of every individual. "And whom I serve." Paul

had also recognized the logical corollary of the inseverability of God and Man. As a member of a God-souled humanity, service—service for others—under God, was the normal attitude of his life. Do we all know this? Is this in any sense the normal habit of our angel-guarded lives? "Whose I am" is true not only of Paul, but of the race. Humanity, therefore, is a corporate unity in which each is solemnly bound to work for others as earnestly, or more earnestly, than he would for himself. This is the irresistible argument of every appeal to the vigorous and healthy members of human society to take up arms against the public sources of temptation and wrong-doing which blight and ruin the lives of thousands. "Whose I am and whom I serve" is a motto that would clear the churches of the many who profess and call themselves Christians, and who just lounge and loiter through life, too timid or too selfish to stretch out a hand to soothe the restless sobbing of a world which is wet with tears.

"Whose I am and whom I serve" is, moreover, a motto that elevates service and obliterates despondency. So closely interwoven are the Divinity and humanity in the human race that it is impossible for man to aid his fellow-man without at the same time ministering to the Eternal. "I was in prison, and ye visited Me," said the Manifestation of the Logos. "Whom I serve." God's servant will never despair of any

one. Workers in the slums of every great city, whose sensibilities are often revolted by the enormities and foulnesses with which they are brought into contact, are on God's service. There is no despair on God's service, and there is no failure on God's service. Once base yourself on the motto, "Whose I am and whom I serve," and it will lift you above physical weariness and mental exhaustion. What are the suggestive initials which give precedence and free passage to certain letters through the post? "O.H.M.S."—On His Majesty's Service. Adopt those letters; place the Life into that mental attitude. Whether it is visiting the poor in a non-receptive district, or whether it is dealing with a fractious child, or nursing a difficult patient, or bearing with the tiresome disposition of another; whether it is a sudden summons after a hard day's work to do some service for another, perhaps to go to some distance on an errand of mercy when you are physically wearied out, and the ordinary normal standard of benevolence breaks down, say to yourself with affirmation, with thought concentration, "O.H.M.S.—On His Majesty's Service. This that I am called upon to do is the service of the Infinite Majesty, which is the Immanent Life of the universe." "O.H.M.S.—I am on His Majesty's Service. I am doing the business of Him whose I am and whom I serve." Then power comes in doing, and you are carried through.

Then give due weight to that saying of the

angel, "Thou must" be brought before Cæsar. Where does free will come in there? Yes, I know we imagine we have free will, and a most valuable illusion it is, for by it we are built into moral beings, and obviously we have a large measure of volition within the irresistible current of the Eternal "Thou must," the unalterable predestination to conformity with the Perfect Son. Doubtless the rational and self-conscious ego is intended to work out, by the formation of moral decisions, God's "Thou must." But, as I have often said, the will of man can no more escape the benevolent action of the will of Abba Father than the planet can escape the law of gravitation. Spinoza said we thought—usefully thought—that we had free will because we could not trace the chain of sequences that made it certain that we should act in a given manner. That appeal to Cæsar, for example: what apparently chance combination of sequences had brought it about? Probably, at last, a sense of irritation at the stupidity of his accusers. It was a mistake from the point of view of ordinary human judgment; it was not popular for a Hebrew to appeal to Cæsar. He apologized for it afterwards, and said, "Not that I had anything to accuse my nation of." But all the while Paul's volition was within the majestic sweep of the grand unalterable "Thou must." All was unfolding as it had been enfolded in the womb of the Infinite Mind before the world was. It may be

beyond our limited apprehension to state in a proposition the equipoise between man's volition and God's predestination, but what a glorious truth it is to fall back upon—"predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son."

Then note the grandeur, the comprehensiveness, of that declaration, "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Let your mind extend and enlarge that saying indefinitely. Think of the protecting, radiating power of one true, trusting, God-like soul. I wonder how often, even on the material plane of physical happening, thousands may have owed, in second causes, personal safety in peril by sea or by land to some Paul who was "On His Majesty's Service" in their midst. Think of the light it throws on those enigmatical words of St. Paul about a believing wife saving an unbelieving husband, and *vice versa*. Think of the illumination which it pours upon the power of influence, how it anticipates the discovery of thought-transference, psychometry, and all the rest of those evidences of the oneness of the race which are beginning to be recognized; how it illustrates the closeness of the links which in the purpose of God bind human beings to each other. Learn to judge others by God's standard: "the Lord looketh not upon the outward appearance." Keep contact with the spiritually awakened. If we had judged Paul by outward appearance we should probably have considered him common-

place, a somewhat irritable Pharisee, of small stature—so much so that his name Paulos (" the little one ") was a nickname—afflicted with ophthalmia, even saying of himself that his bodily presence was contemptible. And what was he ? A God-inhabited King's messenger, convoyed and protected by the Holy Angels of the Most High, so full of grace and power that the overspill, the aureole, of his Divine nature rendered all who sailed with him exempt from peril.

Finally, go back for a moment to that expression, " Whose I am," and see how it links on with the teaching of this morning's Gospel,* and emphasizes the true responsibility of human life. The spiritual application of that allegory called the Parable of the Unjust Steward in this morning's Gospel opens the secret that binds us to the invisible and reaches to the sources of actions, suggesting changed conduct by the transformation of motives for conduct. The lesson it conveys to the awakened is all in those words " Whose I am." It is hardly necessary for me to explain again the framework of the allegory, which is extraordinarily simple though often misunderstood. A picture is drawn of the delinquencies of the land-agent of an absentee proprietor. The arrangement which obtained in those cases was that the land-agent should pay to the proprietor a fixed annual income, reserving for himself whatever extra produce the estate could honestly yield. In carrying

* The ninth Sunday after Trinity.

out this arrangement, the steward in question impoverishes the soil and distresses the tenantry by exacting too heavy a personal profit in addition to the fixed annual sum payable to the absentee proprietor. He is accused to his master of wasting his goods, and receives his dismissal. Either under the sting of an awakened conscience, or from motives of worldly wisdom, this land-agent, instead of wringing to the last his extortion from the tenantry and disappearing, begins at once to make restitution to the tenants he had wronged. It is not from his employer's fixed income, but from his own undue profits that the reductions are made, and when his employer comes to hear of it he commends that rapacious land-agent because his repentance was real enough to induce him to set about the work of reparation to the utmost of his ability so soon as his fault was brought home to him. The Lord draws one lesson from it on the plane of daily life : Make to yourselves friends by your use of earthly things, that when the earthly things fail the friends which you have made, who may have preceded you into the other world, shall receive you into the eternal tabernacles. But the inwardness of the allegory is obviously the truth of the Lord's absolute proprietorship of every human life, that man is not wanderingly independent, " lord of himself, that heritage of woe," but a steward of that which he calls himself for the Eternal, who has entrusted him with the solemn charge. " Whose I am "—

caretaker of myself for the Absolute, the Proprietor, the Indweller who has expressed Himself in me—that should be the dominant thought. The self of which we are stewards is, of course, that ultimate inmost in man which is Divine; it is that Christ nature, that share of the Logos, which is our eternal humanity; that germ is in us, and under our careful, watchful, prayerful culture it will grow, and a bright, high, endless future will be before us. It is possible to waste it, to stunt its growth, to smother it under the accretions of the flesh nature; this is to be a faithless steward. I suppose that what we call death will be just that utterance—"Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." How pitiful, how irrational is that shallow levity that ignores the solemnity of the stewardship of human existence, that takes the members of Christ and misuses them, that lives a double life, making the powers of reason, appetite, affection, imagination, pay, as it were, a double rent—one to God in external religion, and one to self in animal indulgence, thus impoverishing that which is God's.

Yes, this "Whose I am" is a solemn thought; it summons into the service of God every power, every energy, every affection, every hour of life, and most of us are conscious of self-will, pride, caprice, stubbornness, appetite, anger. It is true that it adds a sense of awfulness to life, but the angel of God says: "Fear not," for the alarmed

and awakened soul can hide itself in the splendid counterbalancing conviction of the irresistible overrule of the Divine Proprietor. Are we "the Lord's"? Then His Nature is enfolded in every one of us, our lives are enwrapped by His love. Our physical man enshrines a potentiality which is the secret of the Lord. Even a fall—when, like the steward in the parable, we are unfaithful to the treasure committed to our care—by the agony it entails, the repentance it enforces, the restitution it suggests, causes us to emerge the humbler from the deep contrast between good and evil which we have experienced. "Whose I am." "The immortality of God is embodied in my nature"—is a truth to be appropriated as we appropriate the sunshine. It is ours, our own; it will not alter towards us because we are timid, hesitating, backsliding. In the mighty laws of Nature nothing is too small, nothing too great, to be controlled to perfection—the wondrous wheeling of the mighty planet, or the floating of the gossamer in the still morning air, are the outcome of the same law, and the eternal destiny of our separate selves, equally with the smallest worry of our daily lives, are shared by Him who travails in pain within us. We are His, and His Divine Presence and overrule are "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

"God's greatness rolls around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest,
And every cloud that floats above
And veileth love, itself is love."

PHARISEEISM

"God be merciful to me a sinner."*—LUKE xviii. 13

THERE is a tenderness, a Divine recognition of human weakness, a revelation of the compassion of God for the sin convicted, in our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer that has established it as an accepted classic the whole world over.

It is truly blessed to be thus assured, upon the highest possible authority, that the irrepressible confession of unworthiness which sometimes bursts unbidden from our hearts, is more precious in the sight of God than a life which is a mere dead shape of outward decency or a mere intellectual contemplation of esoteric truth. The remarkable reversal of human judgment in our Lord's verdict upon these two types of character conveys a thought of comfort when the heart sinks at the enormities and abuses and crimes which disgrace our civilization. We are not judges of the comparative heinousness of crime. We estimate wrong-doing by the magnitude of the shock which it administers to the moral sense

* Gospel for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

of a community ; our Lord estimates it from the standpoint of heredity, environment, disposition, temptation, motive, opportunity Many whom society, for its own self-preservation, is compelled to outcast, to condemn, to punish, are less culpable in His sight than some moral and religious favourites whose orthodoxy is unerring and whose lives are blameless, but whose indifference to the disadvantages of their less-favoured brethren has permitted to exist the social conditions of which they are the victims.

The parable, then, in its plain and surface interpretation is cosmopolitan—it is a message to the world. It speaks a language common to the race, and, especially where, as in India, the wide gulf of caste separates man from man, it teaches the heart with power ; and again and again has a Hindoo listened to the story in the Urdoo language, and, after mourning at his lack of the virtues of the Pharisee, has rejoiced over the verdict of justification passed on the publican, and has cried out with a new light and a new hope, " God be merciful to me a sinner." There is a sense, however, in which the warning conveyed in the parable comes home with a peculiar emphasis to a community like ourselves, and especially perhaps to men of my profession. The actors in this story are enduring types, and whatever culpability may have attached to the attitude of Phariseeism in the comparatively dim light of the dispensation of the law, is in-

tensified a thousandfold in the pure light of the Divine altruism of the Gospel. We have been thinking deeply into the Immanence of God, we recognize the ineradicable relationship between God and man, our Credo is based upon the logical necessity for the ultimate victory of the purpose of Divine Fatherhood, we have dared to make upon the Eternal a claim unknown to the Pharisees of old, for recognizing the Lord Jesus as the specimen Elder Brother of the race, we have claimed our sonship and challenged our Father with the sole responsibility for our existence and our environment. It is a noble, a glorious Creed, and he who holds it should be, in the words of Browning,

> "One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
> Never doubted clouds would break;
> Never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would triumph.
> Held, we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, sleep to wake."

Yes, it is a glorious Creed, but is it not obvious that any creed is only worth what it produces, and that such a creed predicates a life animated by a new principle? it implies that when we go astray, in act or word or wish or thought, we are far more culpable than the Pharisee, for it is not merely ourselves, or other men, or public opinion, or social convention that we wrong, but a peculiar wound of gross filial disloyalty is

inflicted upon the infinite and loving indwelling Spirit whose Fatherhood and Immanence we have so boldly claimed. Is it not obvious that God has a claim upon us, the remembrance of which should often fill our hearts with a burning sense of shame, and bring us to our Father in penitence with the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? You say: "We are not Pharisees, surely." Consider for a moment how the malignant spirit of Phariseeism may coexist—nay, does coexist—with the knowledge of the Immanence of God. It is an Eternal law of God that no height of personal sanctity can exonerate an individual from his responsibilities towards his fellow-men. The violation of this law was the peculiar sin of the Pharisees; for this violation the Christ denounced them in language of unexampled bitterness. It was the sin of the Pharisee in this parable, "he despised others." I may be very religious, but if I despise others I am a Pharisee. The same sin besets us in twentieth-century life in three forms—Social, National, Religious. Socially it enwraps itself in a peculiarly subtle form of pride, it creeps into family life and dislocates the peace of home-communion; it freezes upon the lips the word of reconciliation, the kindly look into the eyes, the friendly pressure of the hand between husband and wife, brother and sister, friend and friend, and misunderstandings are not removed, and discords are deepened under the form of want of moral courage. It puts

the dumb spirit into the mouths of believers and withholds them from confessing their faith. They come " up to the temple to pray," the Spirit of God perhaps touches their hearts, they resolve, while they are there, that they will confess Christ by their life and language in the shop, the office, the home, in society. The resolution fails, they persuade themselves that it is modesty, reserve ; it is really pride putting them into a wrong relation to others, and pride is Phariseeism, and Phariseeism is God's religion turned upside-down, and, in a believer in the Immanence of God, it is an anachronism, a contradiction, a disloyalty, a sin. Nationally we are guilty of Phariseeism when we refuse to recognize that we are our brother's keeper while loudly denouncing our brother's sin, and while we take no part in the efforts of reformers to meet new emergencies and new developments of evil with new remedies. This, I imagine, is where the attitude of the Pharisee in the parable was wrong towards his fellow-man : he loathed and despised the tax-gathering sweater— the semi-legal robber of the poor, who fattened upon the misery of his fellow-men, but his very exclusiveness and aloofness made the oppression of the poor more easy. I do not say that the Pharisees could have readily or wholly removed the difficulty, but as the ruling-class—and the most influential class—they could have done something. The tax-gathering sweater of Galilee and Judæa repre-

sented a vested interest and a powerful monopoly ; they were always rich, and money is power. There was at one time a popular rising, headed by Judas of Galilee, against this special grievance, and the Pharisees sided against the people. Again, Nero, who, with all his faults, had a genius for government, once proposed the abolition of the whole system, and if the ruling classes in Galilee had wisely and firmly supported him, he would have been able to overpower the obstructive conservatism of the Senate and disestablish the tax-gatherer. But the Pharisee refused to make the welfare of his fellow-men his business—" this multitude that know not the law are accursed," that was his opinion of the masses ; " Thank God, I am not as this publican," that was his opinion of the sweater ; and for this reason the Divine Reformer unsparingly denounced the ruling classes of His day, and selected a Galilean sweater, Matthew the publican, to be His disciple.

History repeats itself. The respectable and leisured classes of the community rarely, very rarely, side with the oppressed, and tempted populace against those who legally oppress them. When they hear of scenes of brutality and degradation that are a disgrace to civilization, they thank God that it is not so with them, but if the powers that be tentatively suggest any measure by which the evil might be minimized and the temptation removed, they are either indifferent to it or they oppose it violently in the

houses of legislation. It would be a useful self-scrutiny if all possessing votes, influence and voices would, when they came up to the temple to pray, ask themselves what is their attitude and conduct towards the soul-destroying vices around them, for they are not really at peace with God if they are not at peace with men, and they are not at peace with men, as God would have them be, if they are leaving their brothers' burdens and temptations untouched with one of their fingers. Then how common and how wholly disgusting is religious Phariseeism : it is perhaps the most un-Christlike of all. Ecclesiastically it would make one traditional type the sole measure of the Church of God, and ruthlessly excommunicate all who conscientiously differ from that type ; the irreligious Protestantism that greedily believes any amount of lies about the Church of Rome, the bigoted Anglican who wellnigh denies a soul to the Dissenter, the Nonconformity that from mere jealousy would despoil the Established Church, equally merit the verdict: take heed that they whom you despise do not go down to their long home justified rather than yourselves. There is also Theological Phariseeism. Thank God, the degrading spirit of Theological Phariseeism, which carried its creed over the gulf into the things of Eternity, is dying of itself.

Thomas Aquinas said : " In order that the saved saints may enjoy their beatitude more thoroughly

a perfect sight of the punishment of the wicked is granted to them."* That is Phariseeism *in excelsis*, or, I should rather say, *in infernis*. Christianity would richly deserve the contempt of thinking men if buttressed by so foul a creed as this, where miserable Pharisees, in their heaven of unutterable selfishness, repeat for ever in glory the cry condemned in to-day's Gospel, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men, or even as these souls in torment," while the poor souls cried, uselessly and eternally, "God be merciful to us sinners."

There is a remedy for Phariseeism. First it must be discovered, then it can be destroyed. There is a power that can revolutionize and obliterate this mildew in the heart of man. What is it? It is the true vision of God as Immanent in the race, and manifested in the Incarnation, shining into the inmost.

The life and letters of the Apostle St. Paul contain the humble confession of a Pharisee converted by the vision of the Immanence of the Christ in man: "By the grace of God I am what I am," "I am the least of the Apostles, not worthy to be called an Apostle." The finished article is the proof of the artificer's skill. Given Saul of Tarsus, the proud, exclusive,

* "Ut beatitudo sanctorum eis magis complaceat, et de eâ uberiores gratias Deo agant, datur eis ut pœnam impiorum perfecte videant" (Suppl. to part iii., quest. xciv., art. 1, *summa*).

contemptuous, morally blameless, persecuting Pharisee; problem, how to turn him into the humble, self-effacing, trusting, suffering Paul the Apostle, going through the world "on His Majesty's service." What can do it? What changed Paul? The revelation of the Christ in man; the living God manifested as the Divine humanity, Immanent in all men; the Eternal Word, the Logos diffused in the race, proclaiming "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." "Beware," said the vision, "it is God, Immanent in humanity, whom you are persecuting; it is God who is striving in the hearts of these men and women whom ye despise; when you misuse your fellow-man you insult the Christ in man." In Saul's case, being a typical case, a test case, a manifestation in time relations of an eternal truth, the revelation came like a blinding lightning flash out of the illimitable eternity of God. But it is always coming, always pleading. There is an influence, silent as the falling dew, mighty as the rising tide, accessible as a mother's love, ever seeking to pulverize and transfigure the Phariseeism of the heart of man. In one form or another it says, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," in thyself, or in others. Where it comes home—right home to the heart—it shatters self-delusion, it makes the best man say, "Good God, what a sinner I am!" The instant a man sees the tenderness, accessibility, immanence, ubiquity, self-sacrifice, determination of the

Infinite Soul expressed in the human race and manifested in Christ, his life starts from another point, and be he Pope, or Bishop, or Cardinal, or Quaker, be he Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Dissenter, whatever faults of character, lingering mischiefs of long disowned habits may cling to him, one thing he will not be—he will not be a Pharisee, he will never again despise others, whether in his own family or out of it, and say, "Thank God, I am not like So-and-so." He will say, "I am not meet to be called an Apostle, but by the grace of God I am what I am."

And the appropriate supplication for us all to-day is, "From all blindness of heart; from pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, Good Lord, deliver us."

ADVENT

S. P. G.

"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him."—Rev. i. 7.

BENEATH this inspired prophecy, which embodies the message of Advent, I trace, first, a thought of profound consolation, and, secondly, a suggestion of urgent duty. First, consolation—"Every eye shall see Him." It is a glorious promise of ultimate universal perfect sanctification, for, whether in this life or in the life to come, the law is eternal, that only the sanctified can see the Holy One, only "the pure in heart shall see God," yet "every eye *shall* see Him." Yes, it will be a blessed sight even for those who pierced Him, and for all kindreds of the earth when they "wail because of Him." A blessed time when the fountain of repentance is opened, and a baptism of tears tempers the baptism of fire. "Every eye shall see Him." It is the infinite thirst of every awakened soul, the supreme consummation awaiting the noblest spirits who have passed through earth's education. Every inarticulate upward straining of the spirit

which we have been unable to interpret has been the inner eye feeling for Him. Some can interpret it. Faraday, when asked by Acland his conception of after-death consciousness, cried out, "I shall see Him, and that will be enough for me." Augustine cried out, "O let me see Thee; and if to see Thee is to die, let me die that I may see Thee." And yet the anticipation is not always a joy; to those without spiritual intelligence it is meaningless, to those who are constantly resisting their regeneration, it is a trouble and a perplexity. Why should the thought of seeing Him be a trouble and perplexity to any? Is it not that many are mistaken, not in the faith and hope of the Second Advent, but in the nature of it? Is it not because of narrow, limited, materialistic interpretations of the visions and utterances of these Eastern prophets and seers? If our method of interpretation be on the literal, materialistic plane, our inferences will be literal also. The whole teaching of Advent has been narrowed by a pernicious literalism of interpretation, a literalism which is perceptible in the Advent Collect. We have been taught that in these very conditions of flesh and blood existence we shall see Him; we shall witness (or those who will be alive will witness) a personal, corporeal return of the Lord Jesus upon this earth. The literalists exhort us to remember that we live on a planet that is doomed to an awful and sudden destruction which shall burst unawares upon a

careless world ; we are reminded that stars have blazed up and blazed out ; that we live on a furnace of internal fire ; that on a certain day, kept a profound secret by the Ruler of the Universe, a hideous and horrible cosmic cataclysm will occur, and that in the midst of fervent heat, and sheeted flame, and the crash and din and chaos of a dissolving world, shall appear the Son of Man in resplendent glory, who shall conduct a vast Court of Assize, judging and condemning sinners preparatory to the commencement of a reign on earth of a thousand years. It is an unhealthy, unspiritual, unphilosophic conception ; nevertheless, at recurring intervals, it has proved a powerful and most alarming expectation. In the earliest Christian days the return of the crucified Jesus in awful majesty was believed to be imminent ; they had amongst themselves a kind of password, " Maranatha," the Lord is at hand. Down the Christian ages the belief has alternately waxed and waned, becoming very intense during periods of much social disturbance or of unusual prevalence of earthquakes ; twice in comparatively modern times the public mind has been wrought into a sort of frenzy, and men have parted with their possessions, and even, as in America, collected in open spaces or on mountains to await the trumpet of the archangel. Though the prominent advocates of this view of the Advent message constantly wander out of faith into mathematics, and cover themselves with

ridicule by the wholesale failure of their dogmatic prophecies, the fact remains that many deeply spiritually minded men have been profoundly influenced by this expectation. Its foundation undoubtedly is the Messianic imagery of the Book of Daniel, borrowed and amplified by the writer of the Apocalypse ; and also some utterances of our Lord, which, however, clearly refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in the year 70, inasmuch as he expressly declares, " this generation shall not pass till all these things be accomplished." It is also clear that St. Paul abandoned the conception later in his life, for in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians he warns them not to be disturbed on account of what he had written, as though the Lord should immediately appear. My own repudiation of this materialistic interpretation of the Oriental imagery of the Book of Daniel, and of the Apocalypse, is mainly based upon the unquestioned fact that a personal rule on this planet is precisely what the Lord refused when the temptation came to Him to make a miraculous descent into Jerusalem from the pinnacle of the Temple. His Kingdom, He declared, was to be " not of this world," and the Messianic imagery of the Book of Daniel would have been sufficiently fulfilled, if fulfilment in time is looked for, when the Roman Empire became Christian under Constantine in the fourth century, and the long reign of which there shall be no end commenced, in the course of which

the Christian faith becomes ever more and more the dominant religion of civilization. The cosmic cataclysm, and the "great white throne," and "the small and great standing before Him," and "every eye seeing Him," and the whole of the rest of the imagery, will be amply fulfilled for each one of us at the moment of our passing out of these flesh and blood conditions. If the idea of multitude still possesses us, it is satisfied by the fact that more than a million human beings on this planet die every day. If the nature of the judgment baffles us, we may know that it will be the intensified self-consciousness of the disembodied state sweeping away the mists that have blinded the soul, and presenting us with a clear vision of the perfect standard we have failed to reach. If the identity of the Judge is a terror to us, we may know that "the Father judgeth no man." "He hath committed all judgment to the Son," the humanity of the Parent Source, who is of the same nature with us, who has suffered and been tried in all points like as we are, and who will judge us from within, the "Christ in us the hope of glory," so that man, if condemned, will not be God-condemned, but self-condemned, in the highest, truest, most remedial sense.

And if we would lay aside any terror of that after-death judgment, let us anticipate it, let us stand before Him now, consciously, daily; the whole cleansing power of the Kingdom of Heaven

within is at the disposal of him who honestly, truly, with fixed purpose, prays daily, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Why do I say that this conception of the Advent as a future corporeal return of the Lord Jesus is unhealthy, unspiritual, unphilosophic? It is because to my mind any conception of the Incarnation that strains into the vista of the future ages, speculating upon a personal return of Jesus to end the dispensation, is defective at the core, in so far as it induces forgetfulness of the glorious soul-saving truth that He has come into this planet; that as the Word immanent there has never been a time when He was not in it, and that He has never left it, and that He is here now. This yearning for an absent Lord is as though you should gaze through a telescope into the Milky Way to search for a friend who was all the while standing by your side. Human life is a narrow isthmus between two boundless eternities, one called "whence" and the other called "whither"; a living race of many millions is being educated on that narrow isthmus, and the deepest necessity of man is not so much the promise or the threat of an Almighty returning Judge in the distant future as the assurance of a Divine, regenerating, helpful, powerful Friend in the immediate present. It is the purpose of Advent to remind us that such a Friend is ours now; the cradle at Bethlehem (to which the

Advent Sundays lead us) is a manifestation in time-relations that God is the Friend of man, ever in our midst, but veiled, hidden, "coming with clouds." When God's heart came out of the universal into conditions that we men might learn to know and love and trust Him, He came not as a theory, a prevalent idea, a literature, or a bundle of maxims, but as a man—a sympathizing, loving, helpful man; and though the visible form of this embodied character of God disappeared from human sight, put off its flesh limitations and "ascended to the Father"—in other words, was withdrawn into the centre of all life—the Divine individuality under that character has never left us. The Greek word always used for "coming," *parousia*, has not a future significance: it means "alongside of." The coming of Jesus is the perpetual presence of the Jesus embodiment of the Absolute, holding us by the hand, while we stumble across the narrow isthmus called life "until the day break and the shadows flee away.' The non-recognition of the invariable condition of the "coming," or *parousia*, makes it sadly possible for man to stumble through life and never know the nearness of the Divine Friend. "He cometh with clouds," always with clouds; suppose the expression to refer to the coming at the moment of death, the clouds will be not clouds of vapour drawn from the earth by the heat of the sun, but clouds of glorified spirits drawn up by the

Sun of Righteousness from the earthly state. I believe that we are instantly met by the spirits of the dear departed. If the expression be applied to the "Presence," the *parousia*, the clouds are the dust-made clouds of earth's sorrows, discipline, anxieties, all of which thinly veil His loving presence. Scientists tell us there could be no clouds without dust or pulverized matter. Thousands of years ago the Bible anticipated this discovery, for the prophet Nahum says, "The clouds are the dust under His feet." The analogy is luminous with consolation. We often talk of being under a cloud: He comes in that cloud. There is not a cloud of pain, or sorrow, or sickness, or shame, or repentance, or disappointment, accumulated from Earth's much-stirred dust, in which He does not come, and which is not pregnant with the refreshing rain of His presence. "Behold, He cometh with clouds." Every one knows the history of Raphael's "Madonna di San Sisto," at Dresden. Its background is composed of clouds. For many years the picture, begrimed with dirt, remained uncleaned, and the background of clouds looked dark and threatening; when the picture was cleaned and carefully examined, it was discovered that the supposed clouds were not dark atmospheric clouds, but multitudes of angel faces luminously massed together. It is ever thus. His clouds are ministering spirits, angel faces; the heavy masses of Earth's dust, which look so dark and unangelic,

are His veil ; in them He comes, seeking the heart, striving to eradicate selfishness, to humble pride, to quench passion, to melt obstinacy, to wean from earthly things. Thus the spiritual teaching of Advent is not the expectation of a corporeal descent of the Lord from some definite locality in the universe into this planet, but the emphatic assurance that, through the revelation of the Incarnation, the whole being of man is now and here enveloped in a tenderness indescribable ; that our little life, which sometimes seems so stricken, or so abandoned, is floating in an ocean of unfathomable love ; that when the smart and burden of affliction is upon us the Divine Humanity is "hard by," "never so far off as even to be near"—and to believe it is the triumph of faith and the secret of peace.

But I said that under this imagery of the clouds there was not only a thought of profound consolation, but also a suggestion of urgent duty. The one test of true apprehension of the glorious fact that all clouds conceal His presence will be to seek Him and to find Him, and to make Him known under the very darkest clouds, and especially under the cloud of ignorance of His Nature, His Love, His Power, His Accessibility. And from the cloud of what is called Heathenism His voice is calling to us to reveal Him to hearts who do not yet know the inseverability of God and man, and the Immanence of God in man, which was authoritatively manifested in the

Incarnation. "Go and make disciples of those who know Me not," is His command. "Go and tell them that they are children of the Universal Soul; that they are immortal because God is immortal; that they have within them a germ which is divine; that of the germ Christ Jesus was the absolutely perfect Archetypal embodiment; that to believe in Jesus Christ is to believe that His nature, His spirit, dwells in the centre of man's being; that as it is recognized, acknowledged, obeyed, it will regenerate man's nature, ennoble his life, emancipate him from the tyranny of his lower self, and finally conform him to the image of the Perfect Son."

That, surely, is the Gospel, and that alone is the true basis of missionary enterprise. How dare any missionary assume that there is no Christ under the dark cloud of the rudimentary and inadequate conceptions of the heathen races they attempt to evangelize! How dare any man go, especially amongst Oriental races, and imply that their religious aspirations and conceptions are false, idolatrous, accursed; that they themselves are outside the family of God; that their sacred writings are absurd and contemptible, and their prophets and teachers impostors and fanatics! No, under the cloud of misapprehension, ignorance, idolatrous limitations, and degraded worship, is He, waiting for some Paul on Mars Hill, or some Livingstone in Africa, to declare unto these people the true nature,

and relation to themselves, of Him whom they ignorantly worship. The most irrational limitation of the Divine nature of which man is capable is treating non-Christians, of whatever race, as though they were, *ipso facto*, under the wrath and condemnation of God. The Divine Logos or self-utterance of the Eternal Reason, which was incarnate in Jesus, has always been immanent in humanity, inspiring upward thought, assimilating all that was best and noblest and truest in each age, and carrying it higher, and preparing it for the fuller revelation which it is the joy and duty of the enlightened Christian missionary to give. Who, I ask, was the driving power behind the amalgam of Egyptian, Chaldean, and Hebrew conceptions which represented the religion of Moses? Who inspired him to prefer the life of toil and danger to the luxury of Pharaoh's Court? The Apostle says "the Christ," one thousand years before Jesus was born. What indwelling spirit of love was grieved by the hardness of heart of the Israelites in the wilderness? Again the Apostle says "the Christ." Who was hidden under the cloud of the imperfect conceptions of Buddha, Confucius, the author of the Bhagavad Gîta, and earlier still under the Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Brahmanical systems of thought, the purer and better parts of which will live on for ever?

Surely Justin Martyr, in his first "Apology," answers the question when he says, "Those

who lived according to the Logos (that is, those who obeyed their highest impulses) were really Christians, though they are thought to be Atheists." The motto of the true missionary should be, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." The true missionary says: "Your aspirations, your writings, your worships, all bear witness of the Christ who came not to destroy, but to fulfil. He has been hidden from the foundation of the world. He is now manifested." The true missionary studies the conceptions, the beliefs, the aspirations, the philosophies of the race he goes to evangelize, and gives back to them elevated, illuminated, amplified, fulfilled, interpreted, the upward traditions they have inherited from their fathers, and leads them to the living Lord Jesus, whom to know is Eternal Life.

The great and venerable Missionary Society which makes its appeal to you to-day deals, as a rule, with non-Christian races upon the lines I have indicated. Its very name is its credential —"The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel." Propagation is calling into fruit-bearing activity a dormant, vital principle by impregnating it with another vital principle. To "propagate" the Gospel is to convey to the receptive nidus of the universal sonship of the race the impregnating pollen of the "Jesus revelation" of the Infinite Originator called God, in whom all "live and move and have their being."

To-day you are asked to strengthen the hands of the "propagators," these missionaries who have abandoned the comforts of home to labour in the cause of freedom, education, civilization, and evangelization. As Englishmen we have to condone for the past; twenty centuries ago the Master commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and make disciples of every nation." How have we, as a nation, obeyed the command? The earliest missionaries to India were forbidden to leave the shores of England. When, constrained by the love of Christ, they found their way by Holland and America to Calcutta, they were not allowed to remain under the British flag. Carey and his fellow-missionaries were hunted off British territory as outlaws, and were compelled to take refuge in a Danish settlement. Moreover, we have gone into all the world and made many drunkards and opium sots. We grow opium in India, under Government supervision, and send enough to China to destroy in one year more natives than have been converted by the missionaries since missions were established. We have destroyed the Aborigines of Australia and New Zealand with drink; we gain revenue in India from Government liquor-shops; and at this moment, from various parts of Christendom, thousands of hogsheads of fiery spirit find their way into Africa to debauch and destroy the multitudes who, for the first time, are being brought within the reach of civilization. Is it not incumbent upon us to

provide the antidote? The holy, humble-hearted, self-denying missionary, filled with Divine enthusiasm, is the one antidote to this propagandism of devilry which caricatures the Lord's commission. They propagate that higher knowledge of God, as revealed in the Christ, which includes every human good. The pessimists and the cynics taunt us with the tardiness of evangelistic work, and openly proclaim the utter failure of missions. The tardiness is the fault of the Church at home. Failure is impossible. The kingdoms of the world shall, says God, become the kingdoms of the Lord. This is as certain as that the sun shall rise, and sunrise is the standing analogy. On Christmas Day, 1890, I saw from the plateau of Darjeeling the most majestic sight perhaps that the eye of man can perceive on this planet, sunrise in the highest Himalayas. I saw the lofty snow-peak of Kinchinjunga, 29,000 feet above the sea, crowned first with golden light, and slowly the whole grand amphitheatre of mountains caught the glow, till at last the shadows of night were chased even from the deepest valleys. It was an acted prophecy of the Divine promise, "every eye shall see Him"—the promise which holds the future of this sin-darkened world in its embrace. It is we who cause this glorious sunrise to tarry; the least that we can do is to hasten His kingdom by supporting with our poor dross the noble light-bearers in heathen lands. To-day once

more the Father-Soul of the universe reminds us of the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of man, and says to us, His sons, "Where is thy brother?"

"Where is thy brother? From his grave
Near thy own gates, or 'neath a foreign sky,
From the thronged depth of ocean's mourning wave
His answering blood reproachfully doth cry.
Blood of the soul! Can all earth's fountains make
Thy dark stain disappear?
Stewards of God, awake!"

INCARNATION

"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me."—MATT. xi. 6.

THE peculiar prominence accorded to John the Baptist in the appointed Gospels for the two last Sundays in Advent cannot be without a purpose, and I imagine that purpose is to emphasize the necessity for mental preparation. The Baptist's mission was to prepare the way of the Lord, to stimulate a national expectation; the mission of the Church's Advent season is likewise to prepare the way of the Lord, to awaken in the hearts of Christians a due spirit of recollectedness, that their Christmas festival may be a spiritual refreshment, and not merely a recrudescence of the Roman Saturnalia. The words which Jesus spoke were "Spirit and life"; therefore in the answer which He sent to the Baptist's question He was laying down a universal axiom, the force of which is as fresh and cogent to-day as when, twenty centuries ago, it fell from His lips: "Blessed is he who shall not find in Me a hindrance, an occasion of stumbling."

It is only tentatively, by way of suggestion, that I would endeavour to indicate how these words seem to me to hold the key of the evolution of Christian doctrine, and suggest the root-thought for the observance of the Christmas festival.

Our Lord had just appealed to the testimony of His works and to His teaching; He had said, "Go and tell John the things which ye do see and hear"; but from the words which immediately follow it is evident that the circumference of the God-consciousness within Him was widening to the extent of realizing His unique identification with the Father, and with that widening came the recognition by prevision of the misconceptions, and confusions, and over definitions, and metaphysical contradictions, and persecutions, and cruelties which would cluster round His name to the infinite distress of countless hearts, and that Christendom would be rent asunder by wholly immaterial controversies as to the mode of His conception and birth, and the exact nature of the mysterious elements of His Personality, and so He adds, almost as a soliloquy, but also as a proclamation, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in Me." It is noteworthy that He at the same time unhesitatingly assumes a position of unique self-exaltation. He draws away the eyes of man from His psychical triumphs over the action of Nature, which He never spoke of as miracles but as signs, and fixes them on

Himself. Blessed is he who shall not find in Me a stumbling-block—not in My ethics or doctrine. It is eminently appropriate that before the festival of the Incarnation we should ask ourselves the question, What think ye of Christ? Who is He who sends such a message to John the Baptist, and through John the Baptist to the world? The greatest prophets have never spoken thus. The founders of the great religions of the world—Zoroaster, Buddha, Kang-fu-tzee, Mahomet—never uttered words like these. What is the justification for this position of self-exaltation assumed by Jesus of Nazareth? It has "offended" many; one sect has arisen to contradict it.

Some time ago there appeared an able treatise, the object of which was expressed as being "to bring down Jesus from the clouds, and restore Him by criticism to the domain of history." To restore Him to the domain of history is surely a work of supererogation. He is sufficiently and helpfully grafted into the domain of history by the brilliant and scholarly pen of Renan in the "Vie de Jesus," and by the frank admission of Strauss that He lived and died in the reign of Tiberius. And as to "bringing Him down from the clouds," the whole tendency of the deepest spiritual thought of the age is exactly the other way. So far from old foundations being shaken, the developing action of the spirit of truth is evolving the fundamental idea of Christianity

more clearly than ever before, and illuminating the old foundations with greater brilliancy. What, then, is this testimony of God concerning Himself which is offered for our moral admiration on the festival of the Incarnation? What is the master-truth revealing the relation between earth and heaven which was manifested in the cradle at Bethlehem? Clear the mind from the cobwebs which the human lust for overdefinition has spun around men's thoughts of God. The essential being of the self-existent, primal cause of all things is spirit: God is Spirit—not a Spirit, but Spirit. We cannot define spirit, we cannot know spirit: we can only mentally cognize the primal cause as it conditions itself in action. The universe is God in action, God conditioning Himself in phenomena—"the heavens declare the glory of God"—that is, the universe is the proof of God—God is the necessary inference from the universe. "The impossibility of conceiving that this great and wondrous universe," writes Charles Darwin in 1873, "arose through chance seems to me to be the chief argument for the existence of God." Precisely; it is not therefore in essential being that God can be known, but only as He expresses His Eternal Reason or thought in visible and knowable things; for things are "thinks," things are because God thought them, nothing, or no "think," is just God didn't think it, and so it is not. A man, for example, who has never seen Tennyson at any time knows

him as he breathes forth his reason in poetry. God is known as He breathes forth His Reason or Word in the transcendent poetry of the visible creation. If I hold in my hand a violet, I am holding an epitome of the whole of universal existence, which is an aspect of God, an outbirth into visibility of some characteristic which is always in God, as an element of His being. This process of Divine thought transmuting itself into matter—is called the Word. "In the beginning," says St. John, "was the Word"; in other language, God has always been the Speaker, the Self-utterer, the Revealer, and every creative act is the self-clothing of His Word in matter. Similarly, when He made man in His own image, the gift that issues only from God, and is a part of Himself, His Word, became the central life in every man born into the world, and the birth of a man is an incarnation of the Word. Our poor, warped, impoverished faculties may seem to contradict it, but deep in the centre of the being of every man there slumbers a God nature to be awakened, a germ of God in self-utterance.

Thus far deeply-thinking men everywhere, and specially in the Eastern world, have attained; but however intensely they have believed universal life to be the Divine Immanence, they have ever yearned intensely to be able to think this universal life into a personal, objective embodiment. In times of storm and stress and heart

anguish the solitary supremacy of an Omnipotent boundlessness has not satisfied men, and they have mentally conditioned the universal life into some product of the imagination, and have worshipped idols, and natural phenomena, and attributes, and virtues, and plants, and animals, and men, until at last, in the fullness of time, the Father of men satisfies the instinct He had Himself implanted, and comes forth from Infinity to respond to the universal demand of the race. He gathers up these world-wide, agelong instincts of anthropomorphism, and satisfies them wholly in the person of One who was, as no being ever had been before Him, "God manifest in the flesh." The Eternal Word or Reason of the Father sought separate human enclosure in one spotless human form born of a woman, and in Him the Word, immanent in all creation, and in all humanity, "became flesh and dwelt among us." This is the great and solemn fact that makes this particular birthday, commemorated on Christmas Day, like none other in the world; this is why heart preparation is necessary that we may spiritually perceive the rays of shrouded glory which gild the commonplace exterior of the manger at Bethlehem; this is why, during the Christmas Octave, we solemnly kneel when in the Nicene Creed we repeat the words, "And was made man": it is because Jesus is the unique individualization of the infinite self-consciousness of God; because He is the universality of the

Immanence of God made accessible, tangible; because He is the symbol, the Sacrament, the outward and visible sign of the permanent attitude of God towards the race; and in that aspect His appeal is: "Ye sorrow-stricken, bewildered seekers after God, unable to find healing for your heart-wounds in the immensity and vagueness of Omnipotent Absolute Substance, come unto Me, and I will give you rest"; "the Father is greater than I" in the sense that the Absolute is greater than the conditioned, in the sense that diffused electricity is greater than the lightning flash that manifests it; but in your human, finite, rudimentary condition you cannot know the Absolute fully, influentially, except through His self-revelation in Me. Come, therefore, unto Me, and I will give you rest.

In this connexion let me relate an experience personal to myself which made an ineffaceable impression on my mind. Some years ago it came in the line of my ministerial duty to be in close relationship with a very able and advanced thinker, who had been in his youth bewildered by credal definitions and rudimentary conceptions of the Eternal forced upon him by authority, and who had become a pronounced sceptic, and a dangerous one also, as he was a powerful pamphleteer. To him Jesus was a stumbling-block. Together we followed out, during the space of two months, this line of thought, till he saw that this unique Personality who has moulded

the destinies of men was a peculiar and exceptional self-utterance of the universal Father Spirit—the specific embodiment of the vital element through which all that is has its being, the Incarnation of the common spiritual energy that has striven for expression in all the great historic religions of the world, and of the love-force immanent in matter and in men. It was like watching the growth of a flower to see this widening and blossoming in his mind, and at last he wrote down for me his testimony. I repeat it in his own words: "An entire change has taken place in my opinions with regard to everything; for the first time in my life I really believe in God and see a Christianity the existence of which in all my previous thinking I had never so much as imagined. I will tell you of what you have persuaded me. I now believe (1) that there is but one Substance, and that Substance is God; (2) that all phenomena are manifestations of God, and that of these manifestations humanity is the highest; (3) that Christ is the perfect manifestation of God, and therefore is God. I see that, in fact, Christ was a visible display of God; it was God Himself on earth, but, although thus fully manifested, God was at the same time in all things. You have led me into what I can only call a new life." Praise the Lord for that heart come home! Blessed is he, for he is no longer "offended" in the Christ. The God-man, the Divine Humanity, is no longer a stumbling-block to him. Why

will not more witness to the ennobling influence of this glorious faith? You who have tried it and found it true, you who no longer hunt an infinite abstraction through boundless space, why do ye "keep back His loving-kindness and truth from the great congregation"? Inasmuch as doubt is the growing pain of faith there must have been a time when your heart was like melting wax; when the silent abstraction behind phenomena, the universal, unembodied omnipotence was—

> "Too vast for you to know it
> As your trembling spirit would."

And when under some intuitional awakening that you cannot analyse it was true of you:

> "I came to Jesus as I was,
> Weary, and worn, and sad;
> I found in Him a resting-place,
> And He has made me glad."

Was there any confusion in your mind as to persons in the Godhead? Did you involve yourself in Dualism or Tritheism, or in some metaphysical contradiction of the unity of the Most High? No, you know you did not; you came to the supreme revelation of the Eternal Reason self-conditioned in a man. You came to the Jesus-nature of the undivided Deity, and the fact of seeing that Jesus represented God gave you reconciliation, pardon, uplifting; enwrapped you in love, pity, consolation, assurance, and

though perfection and conquest seemed still far off it " made you glad."

Christmas, then, is the agreed-upon anniversary of the precise moment in history when this self-revelation of God's character was made. It was nothing new, it was no afterthought, no expedient to mend a broken plan ; it was a revelation in time relations of what was always everlastingly true. Just as there was a precise moment in geological history, when the rays of the sun first pierced the nebulous mist enveloping the planet on which we live, though the vibrations and undulations of the luminiferous ether that we call light had ever been ; so on Christmas Day the intensity of the universal love of the Father of all worlds, which had never varied, pierced the mist of uncertainty which clouded human hearts, and spoke to them from their own level with a human voice. Christianity is no new religion ; it is the culmination, the concentration, the fulfilment of all religions since the world was.

Obviously this finding God in Jesus, while it elevates our whole conception of the moral relation between God and man, immeasurably increases our responsibility. Deep, reverent thinking gradually convinces us that the Word embodied in Jesus is not only the friend outside us, but the power in us. " I believe," said Emerson, " in the still, small voice, and that voice is the Christ within us." Yes, it is the spirit of Divine sonship restlessly striving to

assert itself. As a grain of wheat is predestined to become an ear of corn because the whole potentiality of increase is involved in itself, so is man predestined to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus, the one perfect Son, because the potentiality of the whole Divine life is involved in his being. The Divine nature inhabits, surrounds, enwraps, penetrates, stirs within us. When we resist it, when we insult it by being selfish, censorious, insincere, impure, it must become our enemy, because it is so inexorably our friend. No life can lie so close to the life of God as do our God-inhabited lives, without finding Him our perpetual strength or our perpetual stumbling-block. "Blessed is he," says the indwelling Lord, "who shall not find in Me, in my nearness, and protest, and correction, and stimulation, a perpetual rebuke and offence." It is not for the preacher to judge anyone but himself. I am but a voice, reiterating the assertion that God must win, must overcome all creaturely defect and obstinacy, must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. God, as He has shown Himself in Jesus, is the spirit of evolution effecting the moral restitution of man. To resist Him is like resisting the lightning-flash; it is to force Him to save you, "yet so as by fire"; to wring from you the confession of Julian the Apostate as he threw his blood-stained hands into the air with the cry, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilæan!" Yes, the Galilæan will conquer,

ultimately conquer the stubbornest will, the darkest life; to yield to Him, to cling in faith and love to the transcendent beauty of His character, recognizing Him as Emmanuel God with us, God for us, God in us is the secret and soul of genuine progress. To pass through the puzzles and paradoxes of life's education calmly certain that in all circumstances an omnipotent, tender, all-wise Friend holds you in His grasp, this it is to be vitalized, empowered, elevated, saved; for "who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God"?

THE BIBLE

"Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of Me; and ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life."—JOHN v. 39, 40 (R.V.).

I ASK you to recognize with what precision this recorded utterance of the Christ defines the place and power of the immortal literature that we call the Bible.

First, it implies that the converting, hallowing power of the written word lies not in any idolatry of the letter as an end in itself. Secondly, it suggests that the secret and soul of Holy Scripture consists in its power to concentrate the will, thought, and affection of the reader upon one adorable Person, who is the life and light of the world.

"Ye search the Scriptures." What is included in the term "Scriptures"? "The Scriptures" represent one form of the activity of the Eternal Reason of the Divine Being, of that outbreathing, that self-uttering of God which is called "the Word." In the broadest, truest sense we dare not limit the expression "Scriptures" to sacred

literature. We are encouraged to conclude from the appeal of the prophet Jeremiah, addressed to the earth, that the movements of the natural world are not dumb strivings of unconscious machinery, like the writhings of the mythical Enceladus under Etna, but the orderly obedience of atoms of matter to the evolving power of that Eternal Reason of God which is called "the Word." And in this sense the universe, with all its orderly processes, "hearing the voice of the Lord," is God's first great Bible, the Word clothed in matter. The Eternal has written His history with the pen of patient time upon the strata of the globe. Sometimes inscribing it in mezzotint engraving in the indescribable beauty of fossil impressions of fern and leaf one thousand years before the Deluge; sometimes painting it in silver upon our window-panes in fairy frost-flowers of symmetry and grace; sometimes suggesting it in the chemical laboratories of the vegetable world, mingling it with the subtle perfume of the flowers, impressing it upon the many beautiful forms of creaturely life. Thousands search these Scriptures, and delight and instruct their fellow-men with the result of their researches; many investigators have been content to drift, locked in the eternal ice, that they may read what God has written in His great frozen Bible of the Polar Seas. But it is not all who find that Eternal Life, which is the Soul of the Universe; an unscientific denial

of the necessary mind behind Nature, a narrow criticism which substitutes the word "law" for the word "Father," and the word "force" for the word "God," blinds their eyes to the fact that the Book of Nature which they are searching bears witness to a Person. They search these Scriptures because in them they think they find the only life they know, and these are they that bear witness of the life; and idolizing the letter, poring over their fossils, tabulating their specimens, they miss the spirit, and they will not come to Him to whom the universe testifies, that they might have life, and believe in "God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

Again, without doubt, another "Scripture" or "expression" of God is humanity. Many minds have recently been disturbed by a lecture, widely reported in the press, delivered by a well-known dramatist, who lampoons, amuses, and instructs his fellow-creatures by his clever plays at the Court Theatre. In his "lecture on religion" he is accused of conspicuous blasphemy. Now, as I have been asked to express my opinion, I would say that, in my opinion, the so-called blasphemy in this lecture is not comparable with the blasphemy sometimes spoken, written, and preached by strict religionists. The play-writer accuses God of powerlessness; the accusation is illogical, self-contradictory, ridiculous, but it is less dishonouring to the Divine Being than the accusation of gross cruelty added to powerlessness!

Most of us were brought up in the doctrine that God, having made man with the purpose of perfecting him, was powerless to overcome a human will stiffened into impenitency and rebellion, and being unable either to cure or annihilate His failure, would keep him alive and sensitive for ever and ever in torture indescribable. Surely, to attribute such injustice and cruelty to the Responsible, Infinite Originator, whose, name is Love, is a profounder blasphemy than anything uttered in this lecture and far more provocative of unbelief. For no argument for the Divine existence will convince an unbeliever so long as prevailing conceptions of God are incongruous to the intellect and repugnant to the moral sense of mankind. But—and this is my point—the lecturer is reported to have said that God could do nothing without us, that we were His brain, hands, and so on. There, perhaps unknowingly, he uttered a grand truth ; for purposes of self-manifestation man is as necessary to God as God is to man ; the heavens declare the glory of God, but man must declare the moral nature of God. That was the meaning of the Incarnation, and the Incarnate One said that, as the Father sent Him, so He sent us. You and I are Scriptures of God ; "Living epistles, known and read of all men," the Apostle says. We human beings are living psalms, prophets, gospels ; thousands will read us who never read the Bible. Let us remember that responsibility. As one has said—

"Our dear Lord's best interpreters
Are faithful human souls;
The Gospel of a life like theirs
Is more than creeds or scrolls."

But it is about "creeds and scrolls" that we have to speak on the Second Sunday in Advent, and on Bible Sunday the term "Scriptures" is somewhat narrowed down to the various written records claiming to reveal to men in different ages such measure of the thought-transcending plans of God as they were able and ready to receive. "Ye search the Scriptures," said our Lord to these men of Judea. What, then, were these Scriptures which were searched in the time of our Lord? It is not easy to declare positively, inasmuch as there never has been any authorized catalogue of the Jewish sacred books. It is an historical mistake to imagine that the Canon of the Old Testament was fixed long before the time of Christ. It was not fixed, even in Palestine, till sixty years after our Lord's death, and several of the books were in dispute during the whole Apostolic period.* Briefly, the beginning of our present collection, called the Bible, was made by Ezra, who, in the fifth century before Christ, republished the five books of the Pentateuch, and designated them "The Holy Book of the Jewish People." After him Nehemiah added the books of Joshua,

* *Cf.* "Who wrote the Bible?" by Washington Gladden, published by Clarke, 14, Fleet Street, London.

Judges, Samuel, and Kings; and, at the same time, the third group of Old Testament Scriptures, called the Hagiographa or Sacred Writings, were gathered by an unknown hand. Professor Westcott, afterwards Bishop of Durham, tells us that the Canon of Old Testament Scriptures was formed gradually during a lengthened interval beginning with Ezra from 458 to 332 B.C.

At the time of our Lord there were two distinct collections of Old Testament writings, one in Hebrew, the other a translation into the Greek made by the Jews in Alexandria called the Septuagint, which contained the Apocrypha; the Septuagint was the Scripture used by our Lord and the Apostles, and it is from the Septuagint that the quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament are taken, and it is this Scripture in all probability that our Lord referred to when He said, "Ye search the Scriptures."

The actual shape of our Old Testament as we now possess it, was practically settled at the Synod of Jamnia, A.D. 90, and was reconsidered and resettled at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397, presided over by Augustine. Our New Testament has a similar, though briefer history. The earliest list, made in the year A.D. 170, mentions all the books we now possess except the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistles of Peter, and the Epistle of James. For over two hundred years various lists of books were compiled by such men as Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian,

Origen, and Eusebius; some rejecting books we now receive as canonical, others admitting books that are now rejected; until at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397, our New Testament was finally fixed in its present form. Thus did men, exercising the critical faculty in the councils of the Church, give us our Bible in its present shape, and he who denies that the Holy Spirit guided the deliberations of the critics in the Council of Carthage has no guarantee of the authenticity of his Bible beyond his own private judgment. But sacred, soul-saving, God-inspired as these Scriptures are, they are not the only Scriptures which have moulded the thought and swayed the destinies of the human race. St. Paul says ALL Scriptures that are inspired by God are profitable. The collect for to-day teaches us to say, with a breadth that would be disowned by many if it were realized, "Blessed Lord, who hast caused *all* Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning." Consider the magnificent literature of Asia and India. Weigh the glorious thoughts and expressions of Zoroaster, Confucius, Buddha, the Hindu sages, and Mahomet. Study some of the noble sayings in the Bhagavad Gîta, ask yourself what was the intellectual and spiritual condition of the Kelts, the Teutons, the Britons, and the Gauls, at the period when these wonderful men spoke these words of eternal wisdom.

Most of these writings are now accessible even to the unlearned. The twenty years' unceasing

labour of Professor Max Müller have brought within our power of searching the Bibles of seven great religions of the world, besides the Jewish and the Christian, all, in their measure, denying materialism, suggesting the spiritual, and witnessing to some great, though dim, ideal. They all come from the East, and the four most prominent are the Veda of the Brahmins, the Lalita Vistara of the Buddhists, the Zendavesta of the Parsees, and the Koran of the Mussulmans. In these, among much that we should rightly call confused and inadequate, there are thoughts of the Eternal so beautiful and true that they can only be outbreathings of the Divine mind. In the Rig Veda, probably the oldest book in the world, are foreshadowings of the Trinity, suggestions of the Incarnation, and words such as these addressed to God, though not by that name : " If I wander like a cloud driven by the wind, if I break Thy law through thoughtlessness, have mercy, Almighty, have mercy." In the Zendavesta, the book of the Zoroastrians, the Magi who followed the star to worship the infant Jesus, you find : " O Ormuzd, Spirit of Good, give me the Holy Spirit, for I believe Thee to be the Light of all the world."

In the Koran, the sacred book of the Mussulmans, it is written : " There is no God but He, the living, the self-subsistent ; He is all that is, in the heavens and in the earth." Beneath the literal narrative of historical events in these

books, which is often childish, there is ever a mystical foreshadowing of the truth that the destiny of man was to unite himself at last to the great Spirit of the Universe without loss of his individuality, and that the great Spirit of the Universe would, somehow, somewhen, image Himself as a transcendental man, and that thus to Him humanity would come. The Sanskrit word "Purusha," occurring both in Brahmin and Buddhist Scriptures, means the "Heavenly Man," a term the meaning of which none could explain.

But what, you may ask, are these Eastern Scriptures to us? Let me tell you. Two hundred years before Christ there arose a remarkable movement amongst the Jews; it came from Alexandria; it rooted itself in Palestine; it poured illumination into the formalism of the Jewish religion; it filtered through the thoughtful Jewish minds into the Talmud and the Kabbala; it taught the doctrine of the Immanence of God in all things, and the coming mystic heavenly man; it spiritualized the Jewish belief in the Messiah; it gave birth to the Logos of Philo; it initiated the philosophy of the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. And whence did it come? Dean Mansel, one of the hardest-headed students and logicians of the nineteenth century, tells us it came from the missionaries from India, learned in the teaching of the Vedas, who visited Egypt within two generations of the time of Alexander the Great, and this view is corroborated by the

inscribed stones of King Asoka, to be seen to this day in various parts of India. What is the conclusion of it all? Surely it is the illimitable Fatherhood of God, the essential solidarity of humanity, the mutual interdependence of race with race, the slow-moving, irresistible evolution of the purpose of God in all ages, nations, peoples, and religions. Surely one result of the consideration should be to teach us that, when we send missionaries to the Brahmins of India, it should not be to revile them as idolaters, to despise them as outcasts, but to bring back to them elevated, illuminated, amplified, fulfilled, realized, the philosophy God gave them to give to us one thousand seven hundred years before the Christ came. To preach to them the Gospel, the good news, that the "Purusha" of the Veda, the "Messiah" of the prophets, the "Heavenly Man" of the Kabbala, the "Logos" of Philo, the "Word that was God" of St. John, are one and the same glorious Being, "promised before times eternal, and now manifested"; that as all streams and rivers, small and great, clear and turbid, flow into the sea, so all religions, however distinct their forms, and phrases, and usages, and conceptions, lead to the illimitable ocean of the love of God, and culminate in the revelation of Jesus, the universal Father-Spirit manifesting His moral character in human limitations, the one beautiful, enduring personality, "Whom to know is Life Eternal."

Ye possessors of the open Bible, members of the race that gives the Bible broadcast to the world, do you "search it"? Why? Is it that you may extract pointed epigrams to confound a theological adversary? That you may build up dogmas and "plans of salvation" and Shibboleths, and superstitiously idolize the letter, worshipping it as the Ephesians worshipped the image of Diana? You do well to search it; it has been the cradle of liberty, the fountain of free institutions, the destroyer of despotisms, the friend of the people. Its inspired precepts have assuaged the fire of passion, and taught the secret of the spiritual life all down the ages. But remember the words of the Christ, these are only "they that bear witness" of Him; do not let Him say "they will not come to Me." It is not possible to put that "coming" into a proposition; it is too secret, too personal; it is the whole soul moving forth, with awakened faith and kindled imagination, to welcome the "Jesus-aspect" of God as a living Person, close beside you, longing to be taken into confederacy with the sorrows and the joys of your changeful, anxious human life. Love your Bibles if you will—I would you loved them more—but remember the call is not to a book, but to a Person; not to a creed, but to a Friend.

An Omnipotent Friend, who has pledged Himself to us in the words: "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth. . . And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon . . . stood before the woman . . . for to devour her child."—REV. xii. 1-4.

A WELL-KNOWN advocate of the verbal dictation theory of Holy Scripture once likened the Bible, in point of literal accuracy, to a railway guide, in which the arrival and departure of every historical event was accurately delineated.

It was the attempt thus to treat the Apocalypse that was the foundation of Luther's openly expressed dislike of the Book. Surely the exact converse of this analogy is the truth. The witness of God's immortal literature is "deep calling unto deep," the Infinite Spirit differentiated in the minds of the several writers, appealing to the measure of the same spirit in the inmost being of the reader. Only the awakened faculty of receptivity can perceive the spiritual

appeal and read it in the message from the heart of God. There are three planes of thought on which the Bible is received—the authoritative, the intellectual, and the intuitional; they belong severally to the literalist, the higher critic, and the mystic, and it is the third of these who can alone "inwardly digest" the Apocalypse; for there is no part of the Bible of which it is more true that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," than of these passages of Scripture selected to prepare the mind for the observance of the Christmas revelation. The literalists, for example, as I have pointed out in a previous sermon, bid us believe that the planet on which we live is doomed to a sudden and awful destruction; that the earth, with its high civilization and its vast mercantile and national interests, shall, upon a certain day, be hideously and horribly destroyed; and that, in the midst of fervent heat, and sheeted flame, and the crash and din and chaos of a dissolving world, the Lord Jesus shall reappear in personal corporeal presence, and shall conduct a vast court of assize.

I have ventured to affirm that this conception, influential as it has been, unfits the mind for the great spiritual discovery of Advent, which is the glorious truth that He has come into this planet, that as the Word Immanent He has never been otherwise than in it, that He has never left it, that He is here now, and that the "coming" of Jesus is the recognition of the

Creative Presence of the humanity of God holding us by the hand as an ever-present Friend, while we stumble across that narrow isthmus between the two boundless eternities of whence and whither which is called human life.

All the Advent Scriptures appear to me to be recorded from the higher spiritual state of perception, and to be addressed to an inward vision. I am not prepared to define this inward vision, to assign a place to it in any metaphysical system ; but if the things of the spirit are only spiritually discerned there must be in man, somewhere, a more illuminated sphere of perception than exists in his natural faculties ; a spiritual consciousness capable of receiving and comprehending the more intense, the more vital realities of being. True, this perceptive faculty is not given to us men perfect and mature as it was possessed by the Christ, the Ideal Specimen of our race, though in Him too it had to grow and increase, but the organ is there, the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, the Divine Logos which was so transcendently embodied in Him is, in germ, in us. " He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one "; and though our vision is dim, admitting only broken lights of revelation, we can penetrate beneath the allegorical sufficiently to perceive that His promised Advent, upon which at this season our thoughts are concentrated, cannot be limited to the signification of a materialized physical arrival on this planet as from some

distant localized spot in infinite space which it would be necessary for Him to leave; not an approach *ab extra*, from without, but a recognition on the part of man of a Presence which has never been otherwise than there. The word *parousia*, translated "coming," literally means "presence," being alongside of, and its happening will be an awakening of the inner consciousness of the immortal perceptions whereby men are able to discern that which has been ever ensphering them, though on the material plane of apprehension they knew it not. The inward nature of man is composed of organs similar in character to the outward. Natural phenomena are the shadows of spiritual realities, and it is a scientific fact that the sensations with which we are most familiar in our physical life have no real objective existence apart from the receptive faculty of consciousness within ourselves. It is possible that we have never thought of it; but sound, luminousness, perfume, have no real existence apart from the sensations produced in us. They are objectively, all of them, only modes of motion, vibrations of the air of different velocities; the mechanism that converts these vibrations into sound, luminousness, perfume, are in us. As these vibrations impinge on certain nerves within us they become to us a consciousness of certain sensations. You hear the booming of a huge bell and you imagine that the bell is making the sound; it is not, it is only causing vibrations;

it is *you* who manufacture the vibrations into sound. A keen thinker of our day has said: "Vibrations of air and ether existed millions of years before there was eye or ear on this globe, and they were external factors in developing these important organs, but only as the auditory nerve was evolved was there sound; only as the optical apparatus was evolved was there luminousness; only as the sense of smell was evolved was there fragrance. Without consciousness, and the organs through which consciousness is differentiated into sensations, there would be no sound and no hearing, no luminousness and no seeing, no fragrance and no smelling." Thus it would be scientifically correct to say the kingdom of sound is within you, the kingdom of light is within you, the kingdom of perfume is within you. And the Lord Jesus, carrying the natural analogy into the spiritual, tells us that "the Kingdom of Heaven is within us"; and so long as night reigns in the centre of that kingdom and all its mystic Divine powers are sunk in stupor and insensibility, the intense nearness of the ceaseless pulsations of the universal Divine life in the very midst of which we "live and move and have our being" are not recognized; the spiritual organs through which the nearness of God would be differentiated in feeling and cognition are numbed and paralysed; and the Advent prayer of every heart conscious of darkness should be to the living Christ of God, "Thou who in the days of

Thy flesh didst give speech to the dumb and sight to the blind, touch, restore, vitalize the benumbed organs of my soul, that I may see Thee and know that Thou art ever 'closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet,' now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thou didst come to visit us in great humility." And the special Advent effort of all should be to cast off the works of darkness (whatever they may be) which sensualize or materialize the life and quench spiritual vision, now in the time of this mortal life, the time of human education and human self-development, because the day of the Lord, the day of open vision must come to each one; the promise is "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." The resources of omnipotent love are inexhaustible, and if these spiritual faculties and organs, the eyes of the soul, are, through our own fault, not opened, "now in the time of this mortal life," they will be opened yet "so as by fire," as the eyes of Dives were opened in Hades; for God is love, and our God is a consuming fire. Therefore, love is fire, and fire is love.

Now, it seems to me that this law of interpretation applies to that apparently incomprehensible chapter of the Apocalypse which has been read to-day as the second lesson, which sounds like a dream, and a vision, and a prophecy, and a fairy-tale all rolled into one. I do not pretend to the insight of Jacob Boehme, still less will I assume the thankless office of a dogmatic inter-

preter of the Apocalypse. That mystic compilation has been for generations the happy hunting-ground of the literalists and pseudo-prophets who, wandering out of facts into mathematics, have manipulated the Apocalypse to support their own favourite political or theological nostrums, and covered themselves with ridicule by the wholesale failure of their dogmatic prophecies. But there is one golden key which seems to fit the wards of the most complicated lock guarding the spiritual secrets of the immortal literature called the Bible, and that golden key is the key of microcosm ; in other words, that *a* man is the epitome of *all* men, and that parables and symbols and allegories in the sacred writings, representing numerous different actors in certain scenes, refer, in their inwardness, to the experiences of a single soul, and can almost invariably be applied to yourself. Apply this golden key of interpretation to the mystical incidents of this chapter in the Apocalypse, and see if it does not confront the soul of man with the secret of its own dignity. When we avoid the fatal mistake of literalism, and recognize that these are not prophecies of meteorological phenomena but of moral experiences, this sacred allegory stands forth as the history of the individual soul, veiled in inspired Oriental imagery, luminous with suggestion, ethical teaching, and Divine assurance. "There appeared a great wonder in heaven." What heaven? All the inspired symbols relating to the Kingdom of

Heaven are to be interpreted in the light of that truth, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." A great wonder within man; either within humanity as a totality, in which case the whole allegory would apply vividly to the wonder of the gradual dawning of Divine consciousness in the transition period of evolution between the highest anthropoid ape and the lowest man; but, as evolution, though inferentially inevitable, is non-proven, and therefore still speculative, we will not pursue that thought, but apply it to the individual. Then "the woman" represents the moral and affectional nature of man, which he shares with the higher animals other than man. And she is "clothed with the sun." The sun, as the most important object in nature, is the obvious symbol of the "greatest thing in the world," love—the love of God. "The Lord our God is a sun," and God is love. Every soul is thus clothed, ensphered, permeated, by the universal Love Spirit. Every soul lives through the diffused life of God, who is love, and it is only His intense nearness that renders Him remote from observation.

The "moon under her feet" is faith working by love. In the night of our experience, when the Divine presence is very dimly recognized, there always remains, with the simple and the pious, faith working by the reflection of the ensphering love, as the moon sheds the reflected light of the sun, and this has ever been the driving power behind all kindly enterprises which

have brightened the world. The "crown of stars" represents the lesser and more broken lights that illuminate the understanding; all, equally with the moon, gaining their light from the central sun. All the lesser lights—art, and science, and music; logic, metaphysics, and philosophy—all are originated, subordinated, transfigured, by the one central spirit. "There is one body," the universe, "and one spirit," the unanalysable life thereof. "And she being with child cried, travailing in birth"—a powerful analogy of the restless, unaccountable striving of a hidden somewhat in the natural man, ever energizing to come to the birth. There is no man living who has not felt those travail pains. It is the God-capacity beginning to cry out for the living God; it is the germ of the Christ-nature, the Divine sonship latent in every man; it is that measure of the Logos or Word, or Eternal Reason, which lighteth every man coming into the world; it is the man-child, the Divine humanity—that which St. Paul calls the "Christ in you"—still in the womb of the soul, eager to be born, to live in man, to grow in man, to ascend the throne of man's being. It is the antitype in every man of that of which the birth of the Christ of the Virgin Mary was the prototype.

"Though Christ in Bethlehem a thousand times be born,
If He be not born in thee, thy heart is all forlorn."

And there is a definite moment with all, whether conscious or unconscious, when the living Christ

is thus born within us. And it is then that the true struggle of the evolution of character begins. It is then that the "great red dragon" of the purely physical nature, the lower region of appetite and passion—that which Tennyson calls the "ape and tiger" within us—stands ready to devour the man-child, to crush and destroy the higher nobler self just born within. But, praise God, whatever may be the vicissitudes of infirm, temptable, suffering humanity, the man-child, the Divine nature, the inseverable link between man and his Maker, is indestructible. "Her child was caught up unto God"; that is, the Divine nature in us dwells ever in God. "That which is born of God sinneth not." This is God's life in man; this is the impregnable foundation of eternal hope. And though "the woman" may have "to flee unto the desert," that is, man—in the region of his perception, imagination, affections—may have sorrow, trial, dereliction; though there is war in his profound interior Kingdom of Heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon—that is, in other words, war within man, the higher impulses fighting the lower—the end is sure. "They prevailed not," we read, "neither was their place found any more in heaven." That is the glorious prophecy of the end for every one of us, when struggle is over, school time passed, the guerilla bands of the old appetites finally subdued, peace restored, character formed. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven"—that is, in your

inmost, deepest self—"Now is come salvation and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ." Thus is the "woman" of the Apocalypse the allegorized representative of every perfected member of the great organic unity called humanity. Clothed with love, based on faith, crowned with knowledge of spiritual truth, the inmost, the Divine humanity ever "hid with Christ in God."

Thus has our Father provided under his inspired allegory a strong consolation for us all in the sore travail of human education. Let us then recognize the power latent within man; let us acknowledge the Kingdom of God within man's soul; let us realize that man is the temple of the living God.

All that we are, all that we can ever hope to be, is derived from this everlasting fountain of life springing up within the soul of man. How immeasurable, how wonderful the revelation, that in the fathomless depths of our being there dwells a power, a spirit of evolution, that is able to transmute our whole being into a temple fit for the habitation of the Eternal! What emphasis does this conception add to St. Paul's words, "The temple of the Lord is holy, which temple ye are"! What significance does it place upon that action of our Lord with which the Advent lessons commence—namely, the cleansing of the temple. The temple of the living God, to the cleansing of which the Christ comes in loving indignation, when even legitimate occupations like those of

the money-changers and the sellers of doves are allowed to monopolize an undue share of His sanctuary, is man. Man, as Chrysostom says, is the true Shechinah, and to this glorious truth Christmas Day is the witness. The Logos, the hidden Divinity, the Christ-nature is in the womb of every human soul, and must be born in the lowly manger of our complex being as He was born at Bethlehem.

> "O would thy heart but be a manger for His birth!
> God would once more become a child on earth."

God becomes a "child on earth," in one sense, whenever a child is naturally born. In a deeper, truer, more transcendent sense, when the Divine God-consciousness is awakened within, and begins to rule, and purify, and form the life.

We are all fellow-pupils in the training-school of human life. The infinite and solemn mystery allegorized in this chapter of the Apocalypse was manifested on Christmas Day, and it challenges us against despondency. It opens to us that "secret place of the Most High" in which fear and anxiety and mourning are swallowed up like bubbles on some calm, deep stream. There are always stricken and sorrowful hearts on Christmas Day. Some will be mourning for the beloved departed, others will be yearning over loved ones far away in some distant part of the earth. The message of Bethlehem's cradle is, "Glad tidings of great joy," for it declares that God and man are inseverable, and therefore that man and man

are inseverable also. The love spirit, embodied for purposes of observation in the Babe of Bethlehem, is master of the universe, and the sole power behind the complexity of human affairs, and the bond of union between souls that are sundered here. All must be ultimately well, for He has sworn that He will subdue all things to Himself, that He will raise and perfect the race, that He will abundantly compensate for every sorrow, eternally right all existing wrongs, and most assuredly bring sundered hearts again together in the many mansions of the Eternal home. So if any soul is disquieted on Christmas Day by the absence or death of loved ones—

> "Cast on God thy care for these,
> Trust Him if thy sight be dim,
> Doubt for them is doubt of Him."

And as for those personal anxieties which are part of our education here, "Arm thy breast with stubborn patience as with triple steel." "The trial of your faith worketh patience," and patience makes every trial a ladder of ascent to spiritual perfection. As Whittier says in his poem on the Angel of Patience :

> "He walks with thee, that angel kind,
> And gently whispers, 'Be resigned ;
> Bear up—bear on—the end shall tell ;
> The dear Lord ordereth all things well.' "

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